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# CELTS and ARYANS

SURVIVALS OF INDO-EUROPEAN SPEECH AND SOCIETY

By

MYLES DILLON, 1900-1972

Late Director, Institute of Advanced Studies  
and School of Celtic Studies, Dublin (Eire)  
Former President, Royal Irish Academy

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY SIMLA



## FOREWORD

The authorities of the *Indian Institute for Advanced Study*, Simla, India, where the late Professor Myles Dillon acted as a Visiting Research Professor for some time, agreed to publish Professor Dillon's *Celts and Aryans* (as a companion volume to Professor S. K. Chatterji's *Balts and Aryans* published in 1968, based on lectures delivered at the *Institute* as one of its research publications). Arrangements were proceeding for the printing and publication of the work, and Professor Dillon handed over the full typescript of his Ms. with a number of photographs for the plates to Professor Chatterji to see the work through the press.

Early in 1972 the book was sent to the press and Professor Chatterji wrote to Professor Dillon in this connexion, asking for his approval and for further instructions in the matter of the printing. But the sad news of the unexpected demise of Professor Dillon on 18th June 1972 was received from Professor D. A. Binchy, one of Professor Dillon's colleagues at the *Institute for Advanced Studies and School of Celtic Studies* in Dublin.

Mrs. Dillon and Professor Binchy thought that the printing of the book might be best done in India by Professor Chatterji, and it was decided that after Professor Chatterji had seen a proof, Professor Binchy was to see



the final proof (involving Irish words and phrases and Irish topics as well as the captions to the plates) in Dublin.

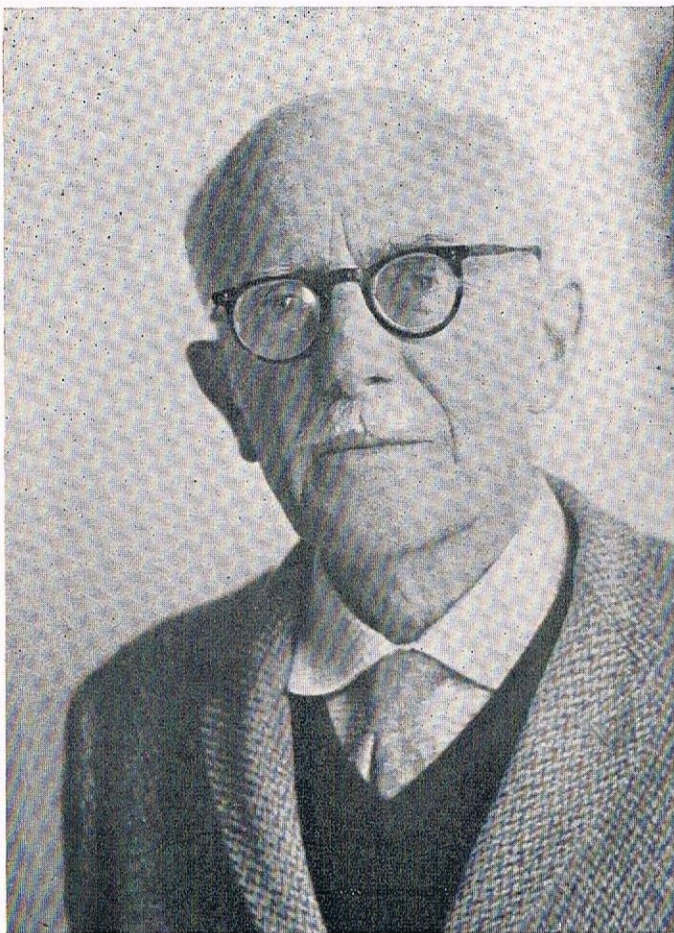
Following this arrangement, the book has finally been printed, and it is now placed before the public. The printed book is as much a tribute from India to the memory of the late Professor Dillon, as the original work itself, as a posthumous publication, is an offering from the late author's mature scholarship at the shrine of Indo-Irish or Ario-Celtic friendship.

1 January 1975

D. A. BINCHY

SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI





PROFESSOR MYLES DILLON  
(1900-1972)

MYLES DILLON (1900-1972)

#### A BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH

BY PROFESSOR D. A. BINCHY  
*Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies*  
*School of Celtic Studies, Dublin*

MYLES DILLON came of a family whose members have played a prominent part in Irish nationalist politics for three generations. His grandfather John Blake Dillon was among the leaders of the 'Young Irelanders' towards the middle of the last century; his father John Dillon was the leader of the Irish Party in the British House of Commons; and his brother James Dillon is a former leader of one of the two large parties in the Irish Parliament and an ex-Minister in two of the national governments. But from his earliest years Myles had decided that *his* service to the national cause would be in the domain of the Irish Language and Literature. Accordingly even in his boyhood, by constant visits to Irish-speaking districts in the west of Ireland, he acquired complete mastery of the local dialect and spoke it fluently for the remainder of his life.

In his first year at University College, Dublin (1917-18) he took the classical languages (in which he had received an excellent training at school), but then switched on to the Celtic



Faculty and came under the influence of Osborn Bergin, Professor of Early and Medieval Irish, whom his successor in the Chair once described as 'the prince of native scholars'. Bergin's high, even austere, standards of scholarship always impressed his more gifted students, and in the third Bergin Memorial Lecture (March 1972), the last he delivered in Ireland, Dillon paid eloquent tribute to this inspiring teacher. From Bergin he also received his first lessons in Sanskrit, which ever afterwards occupied a place in his affections only second to Irish. In 1921 and 1922 he obtained the degrees of B.A. and M.A. in Celtic Studies, both with First Class Honours.

He was then awarded a Travelling Studentship and spent the next four years in Germany and France at the Universities of Berlin, Bonn, Heidelberg and Paris, attending courses in General Comparative Philology but devoting special attention to Sanskrit and Celtic. His teachers included all the most famous contemporary scholars in these disciplines. In 1925 he was awarded the degree of Dr. phil. of Bonn University, where his supervisor was Rudolf Thurneysen, the leading Celtologist of his time. On his return to Ireland in 1926, Trinity College Dublin appointed him Lecturer in Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, a post which he held for two years, at the close of which he returned to his old University where he filled a similar post until 1937. He was then invited to accept the newly created Chair of Irish in the University of Wisconsin and remained there until 1946, when he was appointed Professor of Celtic Philology and Comparative Linguistics in Chicago University. The following year, however, he returned to Europe, having been elected to the Professorship of Celtic in the University of Edinburgh. Finally in 1949 he came back to Ireland as

Senior Professor in the Dublin *Institute for Advanced Studies*, where he was Director of the *School of Celtic Studies* from 1960 to 1968. In 1966 he was elected President of the *Royal Irish Academy* but resigned office after a few months on a question of principle.

Principle mattered intensely to Dillon, for he was a man of outstanding integrity. The high quality of his life was reflected in his scholarship, which gained recognition from many celebrated academic institutions: he received Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Wales, Edinburgh, Louvain and Rennes, and was a member of numerous international learned societies. His linguistic gifts were quite exceptional: he was able to lecture in French and German with the same ease and fluency as in English and Irish. His attachment to India began with its ancient language, but was subsequently extended to the whole country and its people as a result of three protracted visits between 1967 and the early part of 1972. Blessed by a singularly happy marriage and surrounded by a lively and gifted family, he had much to be thankful for and was well aware of it. His unexpected death on June 18, 1972 deprived Ireland of a great personality and India of a true friend.

In addition to his numerous articles in learned journals and his editions of various Irish texts, Dillon published the following major works:

*The Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratnaśoṣa of Sāgara-nandin*, Vol. I, 1937. Vol. II (with V. Raghavan and M. Fowler), 1960.

*The Cycles of the Kings*, 1946 (Oxford University Press).

*The Archaism of Irish Tradition* (British Academy Rhys Lecture, pp. 20), 1947.



*Early Irish Literature*, 1948 (Chicago University Press).

*Teach Yourself Irish* (with Donncha O Cróinín), 1961  
(The English Universities Press Ltd.).

*Celt and Hindu*, 1963 (Vishveshvaranand Indological  
Journal, Vol. I, Part ii, September 1963, pp. 21:  
Hoshiarpur, Panjab, India).

*The Celtic Realms* (with Nora Chadwick), 1967, second  
edition 1972.

He was also editor of the journal *Celtica* and of two  
volumes of broadcast lectures: *Early Irish Society* (1954)  
and *Irish Sagas* (1959).

## PROFESSOR MYLES DILLON: INDOLOGICAL AND SANSKRIT-IRISH STUDIES

BY DR V. RAGHAVAN

*Former Professor of Sanskrit, University of Madras, India*

In 1937, the Oxford University Press brought out an edition of a Sanskrit text on dramaturgy, the *Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratnakośa* of Sāgara-nandin. This was given to me for review by the editor of a local Journal here in Madras. That was the time when I was deeply engrossed—I continue to be so even now—in the study of *Nāṭya Śāstra* texts. I found that the edition was based on a unique ms. discovered by Prof. Sylvain Lévi in Nepal and was prepared by a student of Lévi, Prof. Myles Dillon. I published a series of corrections to this text as offered in that edition. This brought me and Dillon together. There was some bond of a common *guru-kula*, if I may say so, for Prof. Lévi was one of my examiners for my Ph.D. Degree.

Our contacts grew. Dillon had prepared as Part 2 of his *Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratnakośa* a provisional English translation of the text and with the revision and finalisation of this translation as his project, an American student of his, Prof. Murray Fowler of Wisconsin came out to India and worked with me in 1951-52. The result of this collaboration was the publication of the English translation of this



text as a joint work of the three of us, Dillon, Fowler and myself, in the *Transactions* of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A., 1960.

In 1953-4, I toured Europe to survey and prepare catalogues of Sanskrit Ms. Collections for which no printed catalogues were available. This was in connection with my *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, a work to which I had devoted the best part of my life and the whole of my official duties at the University of Madras. Naturally I was most eager to meet Prof. Dillon in Dublin where he was at the Dublin *School of Advanced Studies*, engaged on Celtic Studies. He helped me to examine the mss. in the Trinity College Library and elsewhere in Ireland, and he and Mrs. Dillon looked after me during my brief stay in their country. Dillon had never visited India, and when I was still touring Europe, he was able to get through some arrangements for his visit to this country and I was gratified to have been of some help to him on this occasion.

Dillon was a leading Indo-European linguist and from this, which continued to be his speciality, he went into Celtic literature and culture. His researches brought forth several features especially of Irish bardic poetry which had their striking parallels in the Sanskrit literary tradition as found in the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. For example, the institution of bardic poets (*Sūtas*), the conception of 'poet' comparable to that of the Sanskrit 'seer' (*Rṣi*), the style and diction of bardic poetry, the idea of *Śāpa* (Curse), the 'act of truth' (*Satya-kriyā*), *Phala-śruti* found at the end of ballads, and law-codes comparable to the *Smṛtis* in Sanskrit. Dillon gave accounts of these features in his 'the Archaism of Irish Tradition' (Proceedings of the British Academy, 1947), 'Early Irish Literature' (Chicago, 1948) and 'The Celtic

Realms' (along with Nora Chadwick, The New American Library, 1967).

Dillon was, on his father's side and also on his wife's side, connected with those who had taken a leading part in Irish politics. In his academic career, he had occupied chairs in several Universities—in Edinburgh, and Dublin and in Centres in the U.S. like Wisconsin—where he inaugurated Irish Studies—and also in Chicago. He was in addition, during his sojourn in the U.S., the Vice-President of the *Linguistic Society of America*.

When the Education Ministry of India started an *Advanced Institute in Simla* and I happened to be on its Governing Body from its inception, I sponsored Dillon's visit to the *Institute*. The Indo-Celtic Studies comprehending linguistic, literary and other cultural parallels was a new line of research which I was keen on being initiated and developed in India. I was very pleased to see him and Mrs. Dillon at the Simla Institute, and am more pleased that a book of his on this subject based on his lectures there is being published by the *Institute*.

The news of Dillon's demise has come to me as a personal loss. The last that I saw him was when he and his wife were in Madras at the end of his stay at the *Simla Institute*, and he spoke to us at the *Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute* on this same subject. In his death, we have lost a distinguished Indo-Europeanist. The present book will remain a monument of his life-long work in Indo-Irish Cultural relationship.



ABOUT THE BOOK

MYLES DILLON: INDO-EUROPEAN,  
INDO-ARYAN AND CELTIC STUDIES

BY SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI

*National Professor of India in Humanities*

*President, SAHITYA AKADEMI, Delhi*

*President, VANGIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD, Calcutta*

*Emeritus Professor of Comparative Philology,*

*University of Calcutta*

The sudden and most lamented death of Professor Myles Dillon on June 18, 1972 has been an irreparable loss to Indo-European studies in language, society and culture, a loss which involves also Celtic and Irish Philology as well as Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit. Dr. Dillon has been one of the outstanding authorities on Irish and other Celtic linguistics and literature as well as history, and from Ireland he was called to America where he spent several years as Professor of Celtology in American Universities. He wrote a number of very useful books on ancient Irish culture and literature. Besides, he took up a study of Sanskrit subjects like that of the Sanskrit drama. The present work which unfortunately becomes a posthumous one gives out to the



world a new approach in the study of Indo-European linguistics and Indo-European social customs, primarily on a basis of a comparison between the Old Irish and Celtic world and the Sanskrit and Aryan world.

I begin with a little personal note in this tribute to the memory of Professor Dillon. I consider it to have been a great privilege for me towards the fag end of my life to have known him personally and to have obtained his friendship. As a student of Germanic Linguistics and Philology, I was interested in the earlier literatures as well as linguistics of the other branches of Indo-European including Celtic. The old Celtic literature in Old and Middle Irish and Early Welsh had a fascination for me even from my school days, and one of my earliest literary compositions in my own language, Bengali, was a re-telling of that great story of Noisi and Derdriu from the oldest Irish version from the German. Later on this interest went on increasing, and during my two years' stay and study in the University of London I was happy to attend some of the classes in Old Irish under Professor Robin Flower in the University College of London, and I did some selections from the *Táin Bó Cualnge*. I was looking wistfully for a visit to Ireland, but it could not be done in the earlier days.

An opportunity came in 1962. Through my friend Dr. V. Raghavan, who was a distinguished Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Madras, I came to know about Professor Myles Dillon and the work that he was doing in connexion with Sanskrit, and I corresponded with Dr. Dillon by sending him some of my popular re-tellings of Old Irish and other stories in Bengali. Later on, on my way to Cambridge in U.S.A. to participate in the Ninth International Congress of Linguists

held under the joint auspices of the University of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it was possible for me to go from Calcutta to Harvard by way of Shannon Air-port in South-Western Ireland, and on my way I broke journey in Ireland for three days. Having had a correspondence with Professor Dillon, when I wrote to him that I wanted to see Dublin on my way, he very kindly invited me to his home, and I had the great happiness of being his guest for three days in the month of August 1962. I received the kind hospitality of Professor and Mrs. Dillon, and they helped me to see something of Dublin and its great Irish culture as well as the vestiges of Old Irish civilisation in its libraries and museums. I have given an account of this very enjoyable and profitable visit in Bengali. During my stay I could see and know a little more about the Dillon family and about Professor Dillon's studies and his interests. We had long talks on matters of common interest, and it was exceedingly helpful to me in enlarging my own mental horizon. I had picked up in the streets of Calcutta a unique book long ago during my college days. It was the great Irish Scholar Dr. Whitley Stokes's book on *Old Irish Glosses*. It was a remarkable find—it was a quarto volume beautifully printed with the Latin and Irish text and an English translation and a commentary. This famous Irish scholar who had spent some time in Calcutta as a Barrister in the Calcutta High Court, had published this book during the eighties of the last century. Irish scholars in Europe must have known this book, but there was no one to care for it in Calcutta. I brought this book with me understanding its value, and this was a friendly gift I made to Professor Dillon as my host in Dublin, and I had a great joy to see that he appreciated it. Professor Dillon wanted



to know from me about certain Indian customs like *Sitting Dharnā*—a creditor who could not make his debtor repay him forcing his hands by sitting down at his door and refusing to move unless he was paid. There are similar other customs which he found only in ancient Indian and ancient Irish society and he was doing some work on that.

Professor Dillon took me to the Dublin *Institute for Advanced Studies* and also for *Celtic Studies* of which as far as I remember he was then the Director. From this *Institute* he had published a number of Old Irish texts with notes, and it was a great pleasure to see the valuable work in Celtic which was being done there. Some of the most beautiful specimens of Old Irish art I could see in the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin—including a fabulous Old Irish illuminated manuscript of 480 pages in Latin, *The Book of Kells* (this is in the library of the Trinity College). An interview with Eamon de Valera was arranged by Dr. Dillon. So this visit was in other ways also most fruitful for me.

We travelled by the same plane to Massachusetts for the Conference.

Coming back to India, Dr. V. Raghavan told me that he was anxious that Professor Dillon would come to India, and I was very glad to hear that. He came to India several times, and on one or two occasions I was privileged to arrange for his stay with his daughter in Banaras as the guest of the Maharaja of Banaras in that historic palace of his, the Nandeswar House. He was a Visiting Professor at the *Institute for Advanced Study* in Simla—a semi-Government institution with which I had close connexions. Under the auspices of this *Institute* I had given a course of lectures on the Baltic peoples and their Cultural World with its close

connexion with India. These lectures were later on published in the form of a book called *Balts and Aryans* which has since got a warm reception from Lithuanian and Latvian people in the Soviet Union as well as from those Lithuanians and Latvians who have settled in America and elsewhere.

Professor Dillon's studies and teaching in the Simla *Institute* were mainly in connexion with Indology. But I thought that his visit to India and his great knowledge of both the Celtic as well as the Indic world was something which we must exploit in the interest of Comparative Indo-European Studies. I suggested to him that he must give us a book in the same style as my *Balts and Aryans*, and the subject which I proposed was *Celts and Aryans*. Professor Dillon had liked my book, and he at once agreed. He had already published two important papers on the subject, and was also giving talks in different Indian Universities and Societies on Celtic and Indo-Aryan connexions. I always used to remind him of it, and Professor Dillon went on collecting his materials. But his treatment of the subject was not at all like a layman's, as it was the case with my book on the Balts. As I find it, it is a much deeper and a much more erudite book, going to the fundamentals of some of the vital things in primitive Indo-European speech-habits and in basic Indo-European social institutions.

The manuscript was ready, and in the meanwhile there was a change in the administration of the Simla *Institute*. But finally it was agreed that the book would be published by the Simla *Institute*—*Celts and Aryans*, as a companion volume to *Balts and Aryans*. During his last visit to India, Professor Dillon left with me the beautifully got-up typescript of his manuscript as well as a number of photographs with letter-presses ready—in fact everything, under my care to



see what I could do in getting the whole thing through the press in India.

The book was at last taken up for printing and publication after some initial delay, and I informed in a letter to Professor Dillon that we were going to print it at long last. I did not get a reply for some weeks, and then like a bolt from the blue the news came to me from Dr. D. A. Binchy, one of his colleagues in the *Irish Institute* in Dublin, that Dr. Dillon had passed away. It was decided finally that Dr. Binchy and I would see it through the press, and Dr. Binchy very kindly gave me all facilities and rendered all assistance.

The book is finally out. I am filled with a very sad thought that it was not possible for us to present this golden link of scholarship between India and Ireland as prepared by Dr. Dillon before the learned world during the life-time of Dr. Dillon himself. I could see from my sojourn in his family that he was an ideal husband and father, and he was one of nature's gentlemen—a man who was not only a scholar but was also a great and a good man. In addition to his scholarship he was a man of great understanding, and of faith in the Unseen Reality, and we could see on several occasions how he was deeply religious. One of the incidents in the course of my stay at his house comes to my mind—one day I found before lunch Professor Dillon and one of his sons were playing tennis in the lawn in their house (Drumnigh House, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin), and just at 12 noon the *Angelus* bells began to ring in a neighbouring church. Both father and son immediately stopped their game and knelt down on the grass with bowed heads and uttered a short prayer. This little affair impressed and pleased me very much. In Calcutta, too, I found both Mrs. Dillon and Professor Dillon eagerly

enquiring about facilities for attending Mass in some Roman Catholic Church here when they stayed, partly as my guests.

I am reminded of a beautiful passage from an Old Irish text of about 850 A.D.—*the Instructions of King Cormac Mac Airt*—from which I have taken these six lines as indicative of the ideals of a good householder. These I have inscribed on a marble slab among other similar slabs as decoration in my house in Calcutta. The lines are:

1. Deithide sen-chasa
2. Fir cen fuillem
3. Sidh do Thuathaib
4. Bretha Fira
5. Airmdiu Filed
6. Adrad Dé Móir

which mean—

1. Preserving Ancient Knowledge.
2. Truth without addition.
3. Peace for all Peoples.
4. True Judgments.
5. Honouring Poets and Sages.
6. Adoring Great God.

This, I feel, sums up the character of Myles Dillon as a true son of Ireland, and an inheritor of the great humanism underlying the ancient Celtic culture as well as the Christian Roman Catholic faith of his country.

Belvedere Palace,  
National Library Campus  
Alipur, Calcutta-27  
The 4th December 1973



## PREFACE

BY THE AUTHOR

In 1969 the *Indian Institute of Advanced Study* in Simla offered me a Fellowship for a period of two years. This little book was written during my tenure of the Fellowship. My purpose has been to put together the evidence that I have been able to collect for the survival, in India in the East and among the Celts in the West, of old Indo-European traditions. The matter includes languages and literature, society and religion; and the most valuable evidence for my purpose is that which concerns only India on one side and Gaul, Britain or Ireland on the other. Features that are peculiar to these two regions can fairly be claimed as archaisms that have survived in lateral areas, and thus as part of an Indo-European heritage.

It has been difficult to maintain consistency in the use of capitals and italics in Sanskrit words. Some titles are so familiar that it seemed better not to italicise them, and terms such as *gāthā* and *śloka* also appear in roman type. Titles and technical terms that are less known are in italics. I have used capitals for *Brāhmaṇa*, *Jātaka* and *Purāṇa* where the lower case letters might have been acceptable. Roman numerals are used for volumes of books, but not for volumes of journals. I will not claim to have been consistent, but the effort has been made.



My friends Professor S. K. Chatterji and Professor V. Raghavan have helped me in various ways, not least by the interest they have shown in my work, and I am glad to acknowledge my debt to them. My thanks are also due to Professor Mehendale and to Dr. Nilmadhav Sen of Deccan College for advice and help. Dr. Sen has read the book in typescript and has saved me from many errors; and he has most generously helped me in correcting proofs. My friends Oliver Edwards and Michael Tierney have also read the typescript and made several improvements, and Chapters 5 and 6 have been read and corrected by my friend D. A. Binchy; but they are not responsible for any errors or omissions that remain.

I owe much to the Director and Governors of the Indian Institute, to the Director of Deccan College, and to the Librarian of the College and his staff. A great part of my time was spent in Poona, where I was allowed to enjoy the privileges and resources of Deccan College. There are others who have earned my gratitude in different ways, and I would ask them to accept a general expression of thanks.

## I

## INTRODUCTION

When Sir William Jones delivered his famous address to the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1786, the idea of an Indo-European family of languages was born. He then called attention to similarities between Sanskrit on the one hand and Greek and Latin on the other, which pointed to an affinity between them, and suggested that Gothic and Celtic might also derive from some source common to them all.<sup>1</sup> The comparative study of these languages attracted some of the greatest scholars of the nineteenth century, and soon the group was widened to include Lithuanian and Slavonic, Albanian and Armenian; but the Indo-European character of the Celtic languages remained in doubt.

The greatest of these early linguists was Franz Bopp (1791-1867) who spent some years in Paris as a student,

<sup>1</sup> A Swedish scholar, Thre, had published in 1769 his *Glossarium Suio-Gothicum*, in which the idea of a common Germanic language was implied, but it seems not to have had much effect. It was the discovery of Sanskrit which gave impetus to the initiative of Sir William Jones. The researches of Eugene Aram (1704-59), who planned 'a comparative lexicon of the English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Celtic languages', were never published: see the notice of Aram in DNB.



devoting his time entirely to Sanskrit. He enjoyed the favour of Friedrich von Schlegel, whose book, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*, had appeared in 1808, and August Wilhelm von Schlegel also befriended him. Bopp undertook to show that the verbal system of Sanskrit had a common origin with the system of Greek, Latin, Germanic and Persian. In 1816 he published the work which may be said to have laid the foundations of comparative grammar, *Über das Konjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprachen*.

The paradigm of *ad-* 'to eat' served to illustrate the simplest Sanskrit inflexions:

	<i>Indic. Pres.</i>	<i>Imperf.</i>	<i>Optative</i>
Sg. 1	admi	ādam	adyām
2	atsi	ādaḥ	adyāḥ
3	atti	ādat	adyāt
Du. 1	advah	ādva	adyāva
	atthah	āttam	adyātam
	attah	āttām	adyātām
Pl. 1	admah	ādma	adyāma
2	attha	ātta	adyāta
3	adanti	ādan	adyuḥ

If we compare a simple Greek verb, the resemblance of inflexion appears at once:

	<i>Indic. Pres.</i>	<i>Imperf.</i>	<i>Optative</i>
Sg. 1	phēmí	éphēn	phaîēn
2	phēs	éphēs	phaîēs
3	phēsí	éphē	phaîē
Pl. 1	phamén	éphamen	phaîmen
2	phaté	éphate	phaîte
3	phasi	éphan	phaîen

The *-si* of the third persons singular and plural of the present is for earlier *-ti*, which appears in the 3 sg. *esti* 'is', and in the Doric forms 3 sg. *phati*, 3 pl. *phanti*. The resemblance is thus closer than appears from the Attic forms.

Bopp saw that in Greek, as in Sanskrit, various suffixes were added to the roots of verbs to form the present stem, which are dropped in other tenses, and that one could classify the Greek verbs like the Sanskrit verbs by these suffixes. He successfully compared the first Sanskrit class *pacati* 'cooks' with thematic verbs in Greek; the third, *dadāti* 'gives' and *tiṣṭhati* 'stands' with Greek *dídōmi*, *histēmi*; the fifth, as in *sunumai* 'we beget', with Greek *rhégnumen* 'we break', *deiknumen* 'we show'; the eighth, *tanumai* 'we stretch' from the root *tan* with Greek *tánumen* from the same root; the ninth *krīnāti* 'buys' with Greek *krínō*, *klinō*.<sup>1</sup>

He claimed that the personal endings were generally the same, and pointed to the use of the augment in both languages before imperfect and aorist tenses, comparing Sanskrit *a-dadām* 'I gave' with Greek *é-didōn*. The perfect in both languages is reduplicated: Sanskrit *tutupa* 'I injured' = Greek *tétupha* 'I struck'.

<sup>1</sup> Here Greek *dámnāmi* might also have been chosen.



It is unnecessary here to follow Bopp through his analysis of infinitive, gerundive and participial forms. The comparative method was indeed in process of invention.

The fifth chapter of his book is devoted to a comparison with Latin. He begins with the two Indo-European roots of the verb 'to be', *es*-and *bhū*-, and compares the Latin forms *est*, etc. and *fuī*, etc. with Sanskrit *asti* and *bhavati*; but the sound-system of Latin was so little known in Bopp's day that many of his observations in this chapter are quite wrong. However, the forms of the verb 'to be' served him well. Moreover, he established the identity of the Latin supine with the Sanskrit infinitive in *-tum*.

The last chapter is on the Persian and Germanic conjugations and need not delay us here. It need only be said that Bopp was able to show here too the survival east and west of an original common system. The study of Sanskrit by European scholars thus led to the discovery of the comparative grammar of the Indo-European languages.

Without attempting to present Greek grammar in detail, it will be useful to show how parallel paradigms in the two languages illuminate each other. The dual forms of both noun and verb are omitted here, because they do not correspond so closely. Sanskrit has best preserved the system of consonants, and Greek has preserved the vowels.

Indo-European *\*pater*- 'father':

	Greek	Sanskrit
Nom.	patēr	pitā
Voc.	pāter	pítar
Acc.	patéra	pitáram
Gen.	patrós	pitúḥ
Dat.	patri	pitrí (loc pitári)

Indo-European *\*dhē*- 'to put', 'place':

*Present Indicative*

Sg.	1	títhēmi	dadhāmi
	2	títhēs	dadhāsi
	3	títhēsi	dadhāti
Pl.	1	títhemen	dadhmāh
	2	títhate	datthá
	3	títhéasi (tithenti)	dadhāti

Indo-European *\*bher*- 'to carry':

*Present Indicative*

Sg.	1	phérō	bhārāmi
	2	phéreis	bhārasi
	3	phérei	bhārati
Pl.	1	phéromen	bhārāmaḥ
	2	phérete	bhārata
	3	phérousi (phéronti)	bhāranti

Here the sg. 1 in Sanskrit has borrowed the ending *-mi* of *dadhāmi*, but the form without *-mi* survives in the earliest texts as subjunctive.

*Imperfect*

Sg.	1	épheron	ábharam
	2	épheres	ábharas
	3	éphere	ábharat
Pl.	1	ephéromen	ábharāma
	2	ephérete	ábhārata
	3	épheron	ábharan



Indo-European \**ueid-* 'to see':

(u)oida	véda
(u)oistha	véttha
(u)oide	véda
(u)idmen	vidhmáh
(u)iste	vittá
(u)isāsi	vidúh

Here the perfect of the root 'to see' has in both languages the meaning 'I know'. It will be seen that, with differences of ending in pl. 1 and 3, the paradigms correspond closely, in particular as regards the reduction in the root in the plural forms, as in *tithemi* and *dadhāmi* above. Vedic here preserves also the original accent shift, which has been levelled out in Greek.

These few examples will serve to show the kind of evidence which proved the common origin of the Indo-European languages. There is agreement both in vocabulary and in inflexion. But if we were to go farther into the verbal system, it would appear that Greek and Sanskrit diverge. In Sanskrit the verb forms the various tenses from the root independently, and verbs are classified by their present stems only. Aorist, perfect and future may have various and even alternative forms. There are no 'conjugations', except for the denominative verbs (the tenth class of Pāṇini), which behave alike and could be presented as a conjugation.

In Greek the verbs have fallen into regular classes in which present, future, aorist and perfect correspond. There are two conjugations, verbs in *-ō* and verbs in *-mi*, and a group of 'irregular' verbs, which are in fact those that have resisted analogy and preserved their old inflexion. In Sans-

krit, outside the tenth class, there are no 'regular' verbs: there are merely nine different ways of forming the present stem, with several aorist and future formations, as well as two perfects. Each verb has a separate set of forms.

The study of Comparative Grammar has advanced greatly since Bopp's day. By the middle of the nineteenth century, eight members had been admitted into the Indo-European family, four eastern and four western: Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Albanian, and Balto-Slavonic to the east: Greek, Italian, Germanic and Celtic to the west. The eastern group were called '*satam*-languages' and the western group '*centum*-languages' from the word for 'hundred' which has initial *s* in the eastern group, corresponding to *k(c)* in the western group (p. 31). This division is not now held to be of great importance, as it is merely one detail of phonology; but it is an isogloss binding the four eastern dialects together. Traces of other Indo-European languages were recognised, Ligurian in Gaul and Illyrian and Venetic on the Adriatic coast, but little is known of them. Two important members were added in this century with the discovery of Hittite in Anatolia and Tokharian in Chinese Turkestan. Tokharian was found in documents first discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in the Gobi desert, and shown to be Indo-European by Sieg and Siegling in 1908. The Hittite language of the cuneiform tablets found at Boghazköi was shown by Hrozný to be Indo-European in 1915. These two discoveries have greatly enlarged our view of the Indo-European field, and particularly the decipherment of the Hittite tablets has immensely increased our knowledge. Several other Anatolian dialects have since been identified as forming a group with Hittite, but the details do not concern us.



It may be added that two of the western Indo-European dialects, Italic and Germanic, have had a great expansion in the course of history. Latin had already spread throughout Gaul and the Iberian Peninsula and even into Britain in the first centuries of the Christian era. In its later forms, as Spanish, Portuguese and French, it has spread throughout South and Central America and Mexico, and to the province of Quebec in Canada. French is widely spoken in the Middle East and in the former French colonies of Africa. English, which is a Germanic dialect, has spread to North America, Australia and New Zealand, and since the middle of this century seems likely to become an international language.

In contrast to the fortunes of the Germanic and Italic (or Latin) dialects, the Celtic dialects have steadily declined since ancient times. As we shall see, in about 300 B.C. Celtic dialects must have been widely spoken over an area stretching from Galatia in Asia Minor to the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) in the west and the British Isles in the north. There now remain only Irish and Scottish Gaelic in parts of Ireland and Scotland, Welsh in western Wales, and Breton in western Brittany. These four make up the modern group of living Celtic languages. Manx, akin to Scottish Gaelic, and Cornish, akin to Welsh, are now extinct.

The first to attempt a demonstration that Celtic was Indo-European was Prichard (1786-1848), in *The Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations* (Oxford, 1831). He rightly compared the sandhi-system of Sanskrit to the initial mutations of Welsh, and was able to show a general resemblance between the inflexional system of Celtic and the systems of Latin and Greek and Sanskrit. However, he

did not convince everyone, for Pott, writing in 1836, rejected his theory.

Then in 1837 Adolphe Pictet (1799-1875) published his *De l'affinité des langues celtiques avec le Sanscrit*, in which he firmly asserted that Celtic belonged to the Indo-European family. Friedrich von Schlegel<sup>1</sup> and Pott<sup>2</sup> had expressed doubts about the matter, and Pictet undertook to prove his statement by a direct comparison between the Celtic languages on the one side and Sanskrit on the other, so as to avoid the suspicion of borrowing that could arise as between two languages geographically close to each other. He divided his work into three sections, phonology, word-formation, and inflexion, and he achieved the demonstration in spite of the great defects of the materials at his disposal. The principal collection of Irish texts available was O'Connor's *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores Veteres*, and for the rest he had to rely on O'Reilly's Dictionary and Grammar (Dublin, 1822), MacCurtin's Dictionary (Paris, 1732), and O'Brien's Grammar (Dublin, 1809). For Scottish Gaelic he had Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*, the Highland Society's Dictionary (Edinburgh, 1828) and Stewart's Grammar (1812); for Welsh, the Myfyrian Archaeology, the Dictionary of William Owen (London, 1803) and that of J. Davies (London, 1632); for Breton, the Dictionary (1821) and Grammar (1807) of Le Gonidec; and, of course, there was the *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707) of Edward Lhuyd.

It can be said that Pictet left no doubt that Celtic and Sanskrit were kindred languages, although when there were no sound-laws as a control it was possible only to establish

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Transactions* 1834.

<sup>2</sup> *Etym. Forschungen* II 478.



a sort of cumulative probability. Perhaps not more than one in ten of Pictet's etymologies are valid, as most of his Irish examples are ghost-words. O'Reilly's Dictionary swarms with errors. But these ten per cent remain, and some of his equations are perceptive. The chapter on the prefixes is more successful than that on vowels and consonants: *an-* = *an-*, *ati-* = *aith-*, *du-* = *do-*, *su-* = *so-* are recognised, and *vidhavā* 'widow' = Irish *fedb* is a successful etymology. The numerals are treated successfully, and the important inflexion of the cardinals 'three' and 'four' for the feminine, common to the Celtic dialects and Sanskrit, is observed.<sup>1</sup>

Franz Bopp in the following year welcomed the 'excellent prize essay' of Pictet which, he says, proves with scientific exactness that Celtic stands in close relationship to Sanskrit, but without discussing the initial mutations which give to Celtic so strange an appearance. His *Über die celtischen Sprachen vom Gesichtspunkte der vergleichenden Sprachforschung*<sup>2</sup> is written with a surer grasp of the facts than Pictet showed, and Bopp was able to prove from the effect of the article on a following noun the former presence of inflexional endings similar to those preserved in Sanskrit. Thus he explained the initial mutations which are an outstanding feature of Celtic, both Goidelic and Brythonic, and which seem at the first glance to conflict with the norms of Indo-European grammar. At the end of his memoir (p. 170), Pictet had singled out these initial mutations, and the prepositional pronouns, as elements foreign to the Indo-European system. Now it appeared that

<sup>1</sup> See p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Abh. d. kgl. Akad.* 1838 (Berlin, 1839).

the mutations were a large part of the proof that Celtic is Indo-European.

The sources available to Bopp were so defective that he could not arrive at a true presentation of the Irish declensions and conjugations. He too depended chiefly upon O'Reilly's Dictionary, and many of the words and forms used by Bopp do not exist. For example, the nouns \**dag* gen. \**daige* 'fish' (197), \**bar*, gen. \**bair* 'son' (200), and the verb \**potaim* 'I drink' (239) do not exist; but Bopp's inflexions are possible. However, nom. *crag* 'paw', gen. *craigh* is simply wrong and based on a misprint in O'Reilly (p. 6). On the other hand, his treatment of initial mutations is completely successful.

He first explains 'eclipsis', now called 'nasalisation', which affects the initial so that *n* is prefixed to vowels and to *d-*, *g-*; *m-* to *b-*; and *b*, *d*, *g* to *p-*, *t-*, *c-* respectively; *bh* is prefixed to *f-*; initial *l-*, *m-*, *n-*, *r-* remain unchanged. This 'eclipsis' is caused by the genitive plural of the article. Thus:

éan 'bird'	na n-éan	'of the birds'
iasg 'fish'	na n-iasg	.. .. fish'
deoch 'drink'	na ndeoch	.. .. drinks'
glac 'fist'	na nglac	.. .. fists'
bád 'boat'	na mbád	.. .. boats'
cluas 'ear'	na gcluas	.. .. ears'
ploc 'cheek'	na bploc	.. .. cheeks'
turas 'journey'	na dturas	.. .. journeys'
fód 'sod'	na bhfód	.. .. sods'

And it is caused also by the numerals 7-10, *seacht*, *ocht*, *naoi*, *deich*, three of which ended originally in a nasal, as



can be seen most easily from Latin *septem, novem, decem*. But the genitive plural also ends in Latin and in Sanskrit in a nasal: Vedic *rājñām* Lat. *rēgum* 'of the kings'. And Bopp rightly concluded that 'eclipsis' in Irish was caused by an original final nasal of the preceding word, which had disappeared and left this trace behind.

He then turned to the other form of initial mutation, 'aspiration', now called 'lenition'. A feminine noun preceded by the article and an adjective preceded by a feminine noun suffer lenition in the nominative-accusative singular and in the dative, but not in the genitive nor in any of the plural forms; a masculine noun or adjective is lenited in the genitive and dative singular, but not in the nominative-accusative, nor in the plural: *an cholam* (f.) 'the dove' but *an cú* (m.) 'hound'; g.sg. *na colaime* but *an chon*. Bopp rightly concludes from a comparison with Greek and Sanskrit forms that the nominative singular feminine of the article originally ended in a vowel, *-ā*, and the masculine in a consonant, *-s*; the genitive singular feminine is *-s* and the masculine in a vowel, and similarly for the nouns. So at one stroke, a feature which had been regarded, even by Pictet, as non-Indo-European was shown to be evidence for the Indo-European character of nominal inflexion in Irish.

His treatment of the nouns and pronouns (217-224) confirms his conclusions as to the original inflexion of the article and the causes of the initial mutations. The section on verbs is weakened by inaccurate information about Irish paradigms and the lack of an exact phonology; but by that time the battle is over, and Bopp concludes (263) that Celtic is as close to Sanskrit as any other member of the Indo-European family: 'I think I have proved that just where the Celtic dialects most seem to show an independent origin,

or borrowing from foreign sources unknown to us, the truest and most noteworthy traces of Indo-European origin are to be found. From the distribution of aspirated and non-aspirated forms of the noun, which was hitherto unexplained, we have deduced the true inflexion of the article, which agrees with the system of Sanskrit and its known congeners'.

The position of Celtic as a member of the Indo-European family was thus made secure, but the Celtic languages were not well known by comparison with the other western languages, Germanic, Latin and Greek, and few scholars had studied them. Some early Irish glosses had been published, part of the Würzburg Glosses by J. G. Eckhart, *Commentarii de Rebus Franciae Orientalis et Episcopatus Wirceburgensis*, in 1729, and some of the Milan Glosses by Muratori, *Antiquitates Italiae*, in 1740. The list of sources given by Pictet tells what was generally available in his time, and most of the material was Modern Irish.

In 1837 a young school-teacher named Johann Caspar Zeuss published a book called *Die Deutschen und die Nachbarstämme* ('The Germans and their Neighbours'), and was of course obliged to consider the history and identity of the Celts. This interest led him to undertake the great work which has made his name famous among linguists.

Zeuss spent all his spare time and energy, and much of his savings, on this work. Some important early Irish material was already known, as we have seen, but it had not been fully examined. The Old Irish glosses were apparently unknown to Prichard, Pictet and even Bopp. Zeuss read and interpreted the Old Irish glosses. He proceeded to study all this material grammatically, and to compare it with the Welsh, Cornish, and Breton sources, with Gaulish names and with the few recorded Gaulish inscriptions. In 1853



his *Grammatica Celtica* was published, and it supplied in the limited field of Celtic what Bopp had supplied in the wider field of Indo-European. The astonishing thing about the *Grammatica Celtica* is that it was done largely from material hitherto unpublished, and without the help of preparatory studies such as normally precede a synthesis. Stokes said later in a happy phrase that the *Grammatica Celtica* sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus.<sup>1</sup>

This new discipline was eagerly received by a group of German scholars, Ebel (1820-75), Windisch (1844-1918) and Zimmer (1851-1910), in Italy by Ascoli (1829-1907) and Nigra (1828-1907), in France by Gaidoz (1842-1932) and D'Arbois de Jubainville (1827-1910), and in Ireland by Atkinson (1839-1908), himself an Englishman, and Whitley Stokes (1830-1909), who, though an Irishman, spent most of his life in India. In the years that followed, Thurneysen (1857-1940) in Germany, Strachan (1862-1907) in England, and Loth (1847-1934) in France took the lead in Celtic scholarship. Thurneysen soon became the greatest living Celtic scholar, and most of those of the next generation who pursued Celtic studies with success had been to Freiburg, or later to Bonn, to be trained by him.

The old native tradition of scholarship in Ireland had lived on in Eugene Curry (1794-1862) and John O'Donovan (1809-1861), and it was only gradually that the new learning became known there, largely through the founding in 1903, by private enterprise, of the School of Irish Learning.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the Greek myth about the birth of the goddess Athenē who sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus.

<sup>2</sup> See *Eriu* 10 (1926-28), pp. i-iv.

From the *Grammatica Celtica* it gradually became clear that Celtic had several grammatical features indicating a special kinship with Italic, the most obvious being the passive and deponent forms of the verb, with *r*-endings<sup>1</sup> which were later discovered in Tokharian and Hittite.<sup>2</sup> For our purpose Irish is the chief Celtic dialect and Latin the chief Italic dialect; but Welsh examples may also be used to illustrate features of Celtic, and Oscan and Umbrian (sometimes called 'Sabellic' as a collective term) are minor dialects of Italic.

There is one feature of phonology which provides a curious link between Italic and Celtic. It is well known that Indo-European *qw* becomes *p* in some languages or dialects of a language. Attic Greek *pos* 'how?' appears in Aeolic as *kos*, and Greek *pente* 'five', *leipo* 'leave', *hēpomai* 'I follow' have *p*, where Latin *quinque*, *relinquo*, *sequor* have kept I-E *qw*. Italic and Celtic are both divided into two groups according as I-E *qw* remains as *qu* or becomes *p*. Latin and Irish preserve the *qw*, whereas Sabellic and Welsh have *p*. These and other similarities gave rise to the notion of an Italo-Celtic unity, on the assumption that these two groups remained together after Slavonic, Germanic and Greek had been separated as distinct languages. The term 'Italo-Celtic' was first used, so far as I can see, by Schleicher and belongs to the 'stem-theory' of comparative grammar. The later 'wave-theory' which superseded it, and the whole experience of linguistic geography, have changed the concept of linguistic affinity, and we no longer think of Italo-Celtic splitting into Italic and Celtic as a biological process. But as a name for

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Lat. *sequitur* 'he follows', Ir. *sechithir*; Latin *canitur* 'is sung' Ir. *cantair*.

<sup>2</sup> H. Pedersen, *Groupement* 17 f.; 36 f.



the collection of features common to the two groups, it is still a useful term.

With the publication of the *Grammatica Celtica*, the sounds and forms of the Celtic languages were made known to linguists, but the points of agreement with Latin were perhaps the chief interest that the linguists found in them. They remained rather in the background so far as comparative grammar was concerned, and Meillet could still write in 1928: 'Although the facts of Celtic, which are repellent at the first approach and always difficult to interpret, have been successfully reduced to order.... this evidence remains obscure, awkward and little apt to throw light upon other languages'.<sup>1</sup> However, two German scholars, Ernst Windisch and his pupil Heinrich Zimmer, both distinguished Sanskritists, renewed the thesis of Prichard and Pictet about affinities between Celtic and Sanskrit. Zimmer emphasised the similarity between the initial mutations of Irish and Welsh and the features of sandhi in Sanskrit, and pointed out that in both Celtic and Sanskrit the sentence was the unit rather than the word.<sup>2</sup> Windisch drew attention repeatedly to the similarity between the narrative form of Irish sagas on the one side and of some stories in the *Brāhmaṇas* and of the Buddhist *Jātakas* on the other.<sup>3</sup> The Irish saga is a prose tale in which verse may be used for the dialogue; and in Sanskrit there are Vedic hymns, known as dialogue hymns, which re-appear in the *Brāhmaṇas* as part of a prose tale.

<sup>1</sup> *Esquisse d'une histoire de la langue latine*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 'Die keltischen Sprachen', *Kultur der Gegenwart* I xi 1 (Leipzig, 1909), p. 38. See below p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> RC 5 (1881-83) 70 ff.; *Irische Texte* III 445; *Die altirische Helden-sage Tain Bo Cualnge*, p. xlviii; *Geschichte der Sanskrit-philologie* 404. See below p. 67.

There are indeed some hymns in the Rigveda which seem to belong to a lost tale about Śunaḥśepa, just as has been proposed for the *englynion* in the Welsh Red Book of Hergest (v. *inf.* p. 70 f).

Whitley Stokes, who was widely familiar with Indian tradition, also made some observations on points of agreement in language and literature between India and Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

A new light was thrown on the problem of linguistic affinities by the publication in 1902-1910 of the *Atlas linguistique de la France*, edited by J. Gilliéron and E. Edmont, and of subsequent studies based upon it, notably Gilliéron's *Généalogie des mots qui désignent l'abeille*.<sup>2</sup> He there showed that the old Latin word for 'bee', *apis*, survives in Switzerland, Normandy and the south-west of France, while later forms, usually 'mouche à miel', appear in the centre. This phenomenon of peripheral survival of what is archaic gave rise to a new method, known as 'areal linguistics', of which a full account is given by I. Iordan, *Introduction to Romance Philology* (London, 1937). Linguists came to think in terms of central areas, lateral areas, and isolated areas, of which the first are sources of innovation and the other two are refuges of archaism. The idea had already been expressed by Grierson in the Introduction to volume IV of the Linguistic Survey of India.

This discovery has an obvious bearing on linguistic affinities between Sanskrit and Irish, lying as they do at opposite extremes of the Indo-European territory. Ireland in particular is 'isolated' as well as 'lateral', and therefore

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 84 notes 1 and 2; RC 3, 443; RC 5, 393; *Academy* 49 (1896) 263, 307; *Academy* 50 (1896) 115, 264.

<sup>2</sup> Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études (Paris, 1918).



the ideal home of archaism. And it was soon perceived that the notion of lateral survival could be applied not merely to language, to the names of institutions or ideas, but to the institutions themselves. For the moment we are dealing with language, and it may be said that features common to Celtic and Italic in the west and Indo-Iranian or Tokharian in the east may now be explained as archaic survivals which have special importance for Indo-European origins.

The linguistic position of Celtic may be defined in two dimensions, first — as the most western of the western group, closely akin to Italic as against Greek and Germanic; and second — as the language of a lateral area, archaic in structure and vocabulary, and preserving early Indo-European features in common with Vedic Sanskrit in the far distant east.

## THE CELTS

The Celts are the most westerly of the Indo-European peoples. Their original home was east of the Rhine in Bohemia and Bavaria, and westwards to the Rhine itself. The name *Keltoi* first appears in Herodotus, who wrote in the fifth century B.C. and twice mentions them. He says that they dwell beyond the Pillars of Hercules (a name for the Straits of Gibraltar), and are the most westerly people in Europe except the Cynesians. Our earliest knowledge of them, however, is from the evidence of archaeology; but there can be no certainty about pre-historic times, only a tentative approach to the truth. All statements about pre-historic cultures are subject to this reservation.

By Celts we mean people who spoke or speak a form of Celtic. This linguistic definition is the only satisfactory one, and it is well to have it clearly in mind, as the term Celtic is often used of tools and weapons and ornaments. It then means the tools, weapons or ornaments fashioned by Celtic speakers. Obviously we cannot be certain that the maker of a sword or a brooch spoke a Celtic dialect, if the objects date from a time before writing was known to the culture to which they belong. But from the testimony of Greek and Roman historians, of place-names and river-



names, and by reconstructing backwards in time, we can arrive at a probable opinion.

Many archaeologists would identify the emergence of the Celts with the appearance in central Europe in the late Bronze Age (c. 1200 B.C.) of the Urnfield Culture. This was a fashion of burial in which the body was cremated, the ashes were placed in an urn, and the urns were deposited in cemeteries known as 'urnfields'. At the close of this period (c. 800 B.C.) iron tools and weapons appear so that we speak of the Iron Age; and there is general agreement that by that time we may safely speak of Celtic culture, as there is a continuous cultural development from then until history begins, with Hecataeus of Miletus, Herodotus and their successors, when we know that the territory was Celtic.<sup>1</sup>

However, the separation of Italic, Celtic and Germanic from the Indo-European source-language was probably as early as 2000 B.C., and I suggest that we may safely assume the emergence of a distinct Celtic-speaking society in the period of the Tumulus-culture which preceded that of the urnfields.<sup>2</sup> Pedersen maintained that the period of Italo-Celtic unity (on which he insisted) should be dated much earlier than the period of Indo-Iranian unity, perhaps a thousand years earlier, which would bring us perhaps into the third millennium.<sup>3</sup> Piggott, from the archaeological side, describes the appearance in central Europe before and around 2000 B.C. of 'new peoples whose pot forms, with a plentiful use of ornament made by impressing cords into the surface,

<sup>1</sup> See A. Varagnac, *L'art gaulois* 58 ff. (Zodiaque, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> For these Single-Grave people (also called Battle-Axe people), see G. Clarke, *World Prehistory* 142 (Cambridge, 1961), and the quotation from Stuart Piggott supplied below.

<sup>3</sup> Pedersen, *Linguistic Science* 313, 318-9; *Groupement* 8.

their shaft-hole stone battle-axes buried with their warriors as weapons of prestige, and their individual burials under barrows and often in mortuary houses, all seem to show relations with the regions north of the Black Sea'.<sup>1</sup> These were the peoples who laid the foundations of the Bronze Age in central and northern Europe, as it seems. 'From the beginning of the second millennium B.C., we move', Piggott says, 'without a substantial break, into a central Europe that, by early in the first, can hardly be other than Celtic and perhaps Germanic-speaking'.<sup>2</sup>

It is a probable opinion that these Single-Grave peoples, as they are sometimes called, were the Indo-Europeans themselves, already separating into Balto-Slavs and Greeks, Germans and Italo-Celts, and we may suppose a distinct Celtic-speaking Society early in the second millennium B.C. in Bohemia and Bavaria. Almost at the same time there came from Spain and Portugal an influx of Bell-Beaker folk into central and northern Europe, who merged with the Single-Grave peoples whom they found there. The Bell-Beaker appears in Britain c. 1800 B.C., and I venture to suggest that it was brought by the earliest Celtic settlers of the British Isles. This is not the common opinion. Most scholars date the first Celtic settlements in Britain as late as 600 B.C. But it is a tenable opinion, and the great archaism of Irish tradition in language, literature and social organisation make it seem to me probable.

As Celtic is primarily a linguistic term, the identification of the prehistoric inhabitants of Bohemia and Bavaria, and later the Rhineland and Gaul, as Celts must rest upon a

<sup>1</sup> Stuart Piggott, *Ancient Europe* 84 (Edinburgh, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 91.



linguistic foundation. Over all that area there are place-names compounded with elements such as *briga* 'hill', *dunum* 'fortress', *magus* 'plain', *nemeton* 'sacred place', *ritum* 'ford', *seno-* 'old', *uindo-* 'white'. And these words occur in Irish and Welsh: Ir. *bri* 'hill' (W. *bre*), *dún* 'fort' (W. *dinas*), *mag* 'plain' (W. *ma*), Ir. *nemed* 'sacred place', W. *rhyd* 'ford', Ir. *sen* 'old' (W. *hen*), *find* 'white' (W. *gwyn*). The Irish place-name *Findmhagh* in County Antrim and Welsh *Gwynfa* in Montgomeryshire are exact equivalents of Gaulish \**Ouindómagos* in Gallia Narbonensis, mentioned by Ptolemy 2, 10, 6.

The name 'Celt' itself is probably akin to Old Norse *hildr* 'battle' and cognate Germanic words, and would mean 'warrior'. We have seen that the name first occurs in Herodotus, and Caesar says that the Gauls called themselves *Celtae*. The name came to be used by historians of a people distinguished from the Ligurians and Iberians in the west and from the Illyrians and Scythians in the east. And while they were distinguished in various ways, by customs, religion, manner of warfare, as the accounts of the historians show, the essential difference was in language. Tacitus says in one place: 'Their Gaulish speech shows that the Cotini were not Germans' (*Germania* 43).

Here is Strabo's account of the Celts of Gaul:

The whole race, which is now called Gallic or Galatic, is madly fond of war, high-spirited and quick to battle, but otherwise straightforward and not of evil character. And so when they are stirred up they assemble in their bands for battle, quite openly and without forethought, so that they are easily handled by those who desire to outwit them; for at any time or place and on whatever pretext you stir them up, you will

have them ready to face danger, even if they have nothing on their side but their own strength and courage. On the other hand if won over by gentle persuasion they willingly devote their energies to useful pursuits and even take to a literary education. Their strength depends both on their mighty bodies, and on their numbers. And because of this frank and straightforward element in their character they assemble in large numbers on slight provocation, being ever ready to sympathize with the anger of a neighbour who thinks he has been wronged...

Among all the tribes, generally speaking, there are three classes of men held in special honour: the Bards, the Vates, and the Druids. The Bards are singers and poets; the Vates interpreters of sacrifice and natural philosophers; while the Druids, in addition to the science of nature, study also moral philosophy. They are believed to be the most just of men, and are therefore entrusted with the decision of cases affecting either individuals or the public; indeed in former times they arbitrated in war and brought to a standstill the opponents when about to draw up in line of battle; and murder cases have been most entrusted to their decision. When there are many such cases they believe that there will be a fruitful yield from their fields. These men, as well as other authorities, have pronounced that men's souls and the universe are indestructible, although at times fire or water may (temporarily) prevail.

To the frankness and high-spiritedness of their temperament must be added the traits of childish boastfulness and love of decoration. They wear



ornaments of gold, torques on their necks, and bracelets on their arms and wrists, while people of high rank wear dyed garments besprinkled with gold. It is this vanity which makes them unbearable in victory and so completely downcast in defeat. In addition to their witlessness they possess a trait of barbarous savagery which is especially peculiar to the northern peoples, for when they are leaving the battle-field they fasten to the necks of their horses the heads of their enemies, and on arriving home they nail up this spectacle at the entrances to their houses. Posidonius says that he saw this sight in many places, and was at first disgusted by it, but afterwards, becoming used to it, could bear it with equanimity...<sup>1</sup>

Diodorus Siculus tells us about their poets and their priests:

They have also lyric poets whom they call Bards. They sing to the accompaniment of instruments resembling lyres, sometimes a eulogy and sometimes a satire. They have also certain philosophers and theologians who are treated with special honour, whom they call Druids. They further make use of seers, thinking them worthy of high praise. These latter by their augural observances and by the sacrifice of sacrificial animals can foretell the future and they hold all the people subject to them. In particular when enquiring into matters of great import they have a strange and incredible custom; they devote to death a human being and stab him with a dagger in the region above the diaphragm, and when he has fallen they foretell the

<sup>1</sup> Strabo IV iv 2, 4 (transl. Tierney).

future from his fall, and from the convulsions of his limbs and, moreover, from the spurting of the blood, placing their trust in some ancient and long-continued observation of these practices. Their custom is that no one should offer sacrifice without a philosopher; for they say that thanks should be offered to the gods by those skilled in the divine nature, as though they were people who can speak their language, and through them also they hold that benefits should be asked. And it is not only in the needs of peace but in war also that they carefully obey these men and their song-loving poets, and this is true not only of their friends but also of their enemies. For oftentimes as armies approach each other in line of battle with their swords drawn and their spears raised for the charge, these men come forth between them and stop the conflict, as though they had spell-bound some kind of wild animals. Thus even among the most savage barbarians anger yields to wisdom and Ares does homage to the Muses.<sup>1</sup>

For some important information we are indebted to Julius Caesar. He says that Gaulish society is divided into three classes, *druides*, *equites* and *plebs*, that is to say priests, warriors, and common people, corresponding to the brahman, kshatriya and vaishya of Hindu society. And of the druids he says:

It is said that they commit to memory immense amounts of poetry, and so some of them continue their studies for twenty years. They consider it improper to commit their studies to writing, although they use the Greek alphabet for almost everything else... They

<sup>1</sup> Diodorus V 31 (transl. Tierney).



have also must knowledge of the stars and their motion, of the size of the world and of the earth, of natural philosophy, and of the powers and spheres of action of the immortal gods, which they discuss and hand down to their young students.<sup>1</sup>

Here the similarity in status and function between Celtic druid and Hindu brahman is evident, and points clearly to a common Indo-European inheritance. We shall see later that the fuller evidence of Irish sources shows a class of *filid* (poets) who have inherited the learned tradition of the druids, while they are, of course, no longer priests. They are, however, historians, genealogists and lawyers, professional poets who exact handsome rewards from the king, whom they praise for his generosity, and their satire is feared as much as their praise is valued. In India also there was a professional class of *sūtas*, whose duties are stated in the *Purāṇas*: 'The *sūta*'s special duty was to preserve the genealogies of gods, rishis, and most glorious kings, and the traditions of great men', *Vāyu-purāṇa* I 31-2 (tr. Pargiter). There is a similar passage in the *Padma-purāṇa*.<sup>2</sup> And even down to modern times in Rajasthan and the Panjab, the caste of Bhāṭṭs occupy a similar position in society.

From central Europe where we have found them perhaps as Tumulus people, and more surely as Urnfield people, in the Bronze Age, the Celts spread westwards into Gaul as far as the Atlantic, and south into Spain and Portugal. They reached Britain and Ireland perhaps in the first half of the second millennium. In the fourth century B.C. they were at the height of their power. Northern Italy

<sup>1</sup> *De Bello Gallico* VI 14 (transl. Tierney).

<sup>2</sup> F. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* 15.

was settled at that time, and Celtic raiders plundered Rome in 390 B.C. The shrine of Delphi was raided in 278 B.C. and these Celtic wanderers reached Thrace and Macedonia. Finally an army of some twenty thousand crossed into Asia Minor and founded the three tetrarchies of Galatia in eastern Phrygia. The modern city of Ankara is on the site occupied by the Tectosages; and Strabo tells us that these Galatians assembled from time to time at a sanctuary called *Drunemeton* 'sacred oak-grove',<sup>1</sup> just as did the druids of Gaul in the territory of the Carnutes.<sup>2</sup> At that time a territory stretching from Ireland to Galatia was more or less in Celtic hands. 'For two centuries', says Grenier, 'they were the greatest people in Europe... About 300 B.C. the power of the Celts is at its height and seems inexhaustible in energy and in man-power'.<sup>3</sup>

In later chapters we shall consider the language, literature and institutions of the Celts in their relation to Indian tradition. Something may here be said about Celtic art in a characterisation of the Celts, as no comparison with India can usefully be made in that connection, except where the gods are represented (pp. 136, 139).

The art-form that is properly Celtic is that of the late Iron Age, known as La Tène, from a site in Switzerland where typical finds were made. This late Iron Age culture appears c. 400 B.C. and is usually thought of as ending c. 100 A.D. with the establishment of Roman culture in Gaul and Spain.

Jacobsthal, who is our chief authority, says that Celtic art is one culture, even though it is spread over so wide a

<sup>1</sup> Strabo XII 5, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *De Bello Gallico* VI 14.

<sup>3</sup> A. Grenier, *Les Gaulois* 99-100.



territory,<sup>1</sup> and the plates in this book, of objects found in places as far apart as Bohemia and western Ireland, support this judgement. The art that they portray is imaginative rather than representational, delighting in pattern and invention. And its affinity is with Scythian and Near Eastern forms rather than with the Mediterranean:

'To the Greeks a spiral is a spiral and a face a face, and it is always clear where the one ends and the other begins, whereas the Celts see the faces into the spirals or tendrils... It is the mechanism of dreams, where things have floating contours and pass into other things.'<sup>2</sup>

The stone pillar from Sankt Goar in the Pfalzfeld (pl. 1) well illustrates this imaginative quality of Celtic art, and with it may be compared the Turoe Stone in Co. Galway, Ireland (pl. 2) with similar ornament. The gilt helmet from Amfreville (pl. 3) and the mirror from Birdlip, Gloucestershire (pl. 4) are good examples of curvilinear patterns. The beautiful Battersea Shield (pl. 5), now in the British Museum and the bronze plaque from Merionethshire in Wales (pl. 6) are others. The most splendid object of Celtic workmanship, which indeed shows Greek and Scythian influence, is the famous Gundestrup Cauldron (pll. 7, 8) in the Museum at Copenhagen. The figure of the horned god Cernunnos, in yogic posture and surrounded by animals, strangely resembles that on a seal from Mohenjodaro in the Delhi Museum, which has been interpreted as an image of Śiva Paśupati (pl. 9). The cauldron is thought to have been made somewhere in the Middle Danube country perhaps in

<sup>1</sup> *Early Celtic Art* (Oxford, 1944) I 160.

<sup>2</sup> P. Jacobsthal, 'Imagery in Early Celtic Art' p. 10 (PBA 27).

the first century B.C. But the seal belongs to a pre-Aryan culture, so that one would have to suppose borrowing from a Middle Eastern source in the Indo-European period (p. 139).

One of the first expressions of naturalistic art in the La Tène culture is shown in the sculptured heads (*têtes coupées*) which are a familiar feature of Celtic art of widely scattered provenance. Several examples are given (in the plates 10-13), where I have ventured to include some from twelfth century Irish churches, apparently a last survival of the old Celtic tradition.

These severed heads are well described by Lantier, *Les Origines de l'art français* 64 f.<sup>1</sup> The earliest are from Entremont in the south of France, and may belong to the third century B.C. There was in fact a veritable cult of the severed head among the Celts which is not easy to explain. It must be connected with the habit of taking the heads of slain enemies which was practised in Gaul and in Ireland. The head may have been thought to contain the spirit after death, and possession of the head prolonged the triumph of the slayer. 'I have never slept without the head of a Connachtman under my knee!', says the Ulster hero, Conall Cernach, in *The Story of Mac Dathó's Pig*.<sup>1</sup> But sometimes the head of a friend was preserved and honoured. There are tales both in Welsh and in Irish in which the head of a king slain in battle is so treated by friends or followers. In the Welsh tale, *Branwen, Daughter of Llyr*, the head of Bran the Blessed, who had been slain in Ireland, is brought back to Britain and presides over the joyous

<sup>1</sup> See also Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London, 1967); AG 77 f.

<sup>1</sup> CR 247.



feasting of the survivors in the Island of Gwales for eighty years.<sup>2</sup> In an Irish saga, *The Battle of Allen*, the head of the beloved warrior, Donn Bó, was set upon a pillar after the battle, and it sang for the Leinstermen so that they wept in grief. The head of Fergal, king of Tara, was entertained by Cathal, king of Cashel, who ordered it to be washed and combed and wrapped in a satin cloth. Seven oxen and seven wethers and seven pigs were cooked and placed before Fergal's head, and the food was then distributed to the poor of the neighbouring churches.<sup>3</sup>

O'Rahilly sees in these traditions traces of an earlier belief concerning the divine Head presiding over an Other-world feast.<sup>4</sup>

The Gaulish sculpture of the Gallo-Roman period, from the middle of the first century A.D. till the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, is more important for the study of Celtic religion than for its artistic quality, but it is not mere imitation. The monuments, wrongly called altars, which were found at Notre Dame in Paris and are now in the Cluny Museum, have dignity and a sort of mystery, and are nobly executed. Here Esus, Taruos Trigaranus, and Cernunnos are portrayed (pll. 13-15). The altar at Trier shows Esus again together with the Taruos Trigaranus (pl. 16); and Sucellos and Nantosuelta appear on a monument at Sarrebourg (pl. 17). These are in the same class as the Paris monuments, and all have a distinctly Gaulish character. There is also the remarkable sculpture in wood of the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. recently

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 281.

<sup>3</sup> RC 24, 41 ff. Christian charity and pagan ritual are here side by side.

<sup>4</sup> EIFIM 283.

discovered, which shows the independence of the Gaulish artists.<sup>1</sup>

The La Tène art that Jacobsthal describes was richly developed in Ireland and still inspires the sculpture and manuscript illumination of the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> The grandest of the manuscripts are the Book of Durrow (7th cent.) and the Book of Kells (8th cent.), and pages from these are shown in pll. 18-20. The sculpture and metalwork are illustrated by plates of the Cross of Muredach at Monasterboice (p. 21), the Ardagh Chalice (pll. 22-23), and the Cross of Cong (pl. 24).

In the fourth century B.C. when the Mauryas were establishing themselves in north-west India, the Celts were dominant in most of central and western Europe. There followed a steady decline. The Gauls of North Italy were conquered by the Romans, and the tribes north of the Alps were subjugated or expelled by the Germans. Then Spain was conquered by Scipio, and Caesar completed the conquest of Gaul. Even Britain came under the Roman yoke and was a province of the Empire for four centuries. Only Ireland remained untouched by Roman influence; and Ireland, and to a lesser extent Wales, preserved much of the Celtic heritage which was lost on the Continent. At many points this Celtic heritage resembles the heritage of India, and this can only mean that in these respects India and Ireland share a common Indo-European tradition.

<sup>1</sup> CR 297-8; pll. 72-77.

<sup>2</sup> See Francoise Henry, *Irish Art*. 3 vols. (London, 1965-70).



## SANSKRIT AND IRISH

In his account of Fick's *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Sprachen* Pedersen discusses the value to be attached to the testimony of individual languages for the restoration of Indo-European. Fick divided the Indo-European family into an Indo-Iranian group and a European group, and required a witness from each side to prove that a word is of Indo-European date. The division was based upon the forms in which original palatal *k'* appeared in each group. In the 'European' group it remained as *k'* (*c*), in Indo-Iranian it became *s* (*ś*). The development is illustrated by the word for 'hundred': Greek *hekatón*, Latin *centum*, Irish *cét* (Welsh *cant*); Old Persian *satəm*, Sanskrit *śatam*. Pedersen points out that linguists no longer attach such importance to the difference between *satəm* and *centum* languages, and would accept the testimony of all the other Indo-European languages, even if the word in question were not attested in Indian or Iranian. And he adds: 'Cases are easily conceivable where the evidence of two branches would suffice to justify our attributing a word to the Indo-European period. But in such cases the languages must belong to opposite extremes of the family, and there must have been no special intercourse between them'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Linguistic Science* 275.

This is in accord with Gilliéron's discovery and the doctrine of areal linguistics; but Gilliéron takes us further and would say that languages at opposite extremes of the family may be expected to show agreement in the preservation of archaic forms (p. 17). A comparison of Irish and Sanskrit (Celtic and Indo-Iranian), lying at opposite extremes of the Indo-European area, is therefore of particular interest, as we may expect points of agreement, and any such agreement that is peculiar to these two groups is likely to be due to the survival in lateral areas of archaic Indo-European forms.

Zimmer maintained that the sandhi system in Sanskrit and the system of initial mutations in Celtic languages showed a common archaism in the treatment of the phrase rather than the word as the unit of speech: 'Early Celtic dialects preserved best, of all the Indo-European languages of any period, a feature of Indo-European in which even modern Celtic languages excel the oldest forms of Sanskrit or Greek. They proclaimed the fact that the smallest unit of Indo-European speech was not the single word, but rather the short sentence and its groups of closely connected words: noun and adjective, noun and dependent genitive, pronoun and noun, preposition and noun, copula and noun, verb and noun-object. Here, between the final of one and the initial of the other, the same phonological rules apply (assimilations and dissimilations) as within the word itself'.<sup>1</sup> For example, Welsh *tad* 'father' had three other forms, according to whether the preceding word originally ended in a vowel, a nasal, or -s: *dy dad* 'your father', *fy nhad* 'my

<sup>1</sup> 'Die keltischen Sprachen' 38 (*Kultur der Gegenwart* I xi 1, Leipzig 1909)



father', *ei thad* 'her father', and so for all words beginning with *p*, *t* or *c*. Similar changes occur in Irish, as we have seen (pp 10-12). If we turn to Sanskrit, we find in the rules for sandhi the vestiges of a similar system. Final voiceless consonants become voiced before a following voiced sound, and final *-t* is subject to various further assimilations, to *-c* before *c*- and to *-n* before *n*-: *samyak* + *vadati* > *samyagvadati* 'he speaks truly', *parivrāt* + *gacchati* > *parivrāḍgacchati* 'the mendicant goes', *kakup na* > *kakubna* or *kakumna* (*kakubna* *drśyate* 'the peak is not visible'); *tat* + *ca* > *tacca* 'and it', *tat* + *nṛtyati* > *tannṛtyati* 'it dances'.

In Sanskrit, generally speaking, the final of the first word is assimilated to a following initial, whereas in Irish it is the other way round; but the essential point is that in both languages the word-group is the unit of speech rather than the word. Renou says of Vedic: 'The autonomy of the word, supposed to be complete in Indo-European, is greatly limited, a fact which makes easier the long compounds of later Sanskrit. Many accessory elements become enclitic, a principle which is of Indo-European date; others are proclitic. The facts of sandhi, sporadic vowel harmony, alliteration and so on, all show that the true unit for recitation is the *pāda* (quarter-line of verse), just as the unit for meaning is the 'formula'.'<sup>1</sup>

There is a discrepancy between these two quotations in that Zimmer regards the primacy of the word-group as a feature of Indo-European and hence an archaism common to Celtic and Indian, whereas Renou supposes that the word was autonomous in Indo-European and that the word-group

<sup>1</sup> L. Renou, *Histoire de la langue sanscrite* 16.

emerged in Vedic later. The truth may be that both models existed in the earliest period, and that the agreement between Indian and Celtic is indeed due to lateral survival of a common archaism. It is a fact that in the oldest Irish manuscripts words which are grouped around one chief stress are written as one word: *innádcualaidsi* for *in nád cúalaid si* 'have ye not heard?'; *istrissandédesin* for *is trissa ndéde sin* 'it is through those two things'; *nimcharatsa* for *ní-m charat sa* 'they love me not'. Thurneysen says that this writing of word-groups rather than single words is characteristic of Old Irish.<sup>1</sup> This is part of the same tendency and supports Zimmer's contention so far as Irish is concerned. But it is in vocabulary and morphology that the comparison of these two languages yields the most interesting results.

Paul Kretschmer long ago showed that Indo-Iranian and Italo-Celtic were linked together by a group of words peculiar to them, and Vendryes later explained some of them as belonging to a religious and ritual vocabulary which had been preserved by the brahmins in India and by the flamens and druids in Italy and Gaul. The words in question are: *śraddadhāti* 'believes': Lat. *credo*, Ir. *cretim*; Pahlavi *parast* 'devotee': Ir. *iress* 'faith' (< \**pare-sthā*-); Avestic *yaoṣ* 'pure': Lat. *iustus*, Ir. *uisse* 'just'; Skr. *viśrambhate* 'trust, confidence': Ir. *crábur* 'devotion'; Skr. *rāḥ* 'gift, treasure': Ir. *rath* (W. *rhad*); Skr. *rāt* 'king': Lat. *rex*, Ir. *rí*; Skr. *aryaḥ* 'Aryan': Ir. *aire* 'freeman'; O.P. *naiba* 'beautiful, good': Ir. *noeb* 'holy'; Skr. *pibati* 'drinks': Lat. *bibo*, Ir. *ibim*; Skr. *inddhé* 'he kindles': Ir. *-andaim*; Skr. *mindā* 'physical defect': Lat. *mendum*, *mendā* 'blemish':

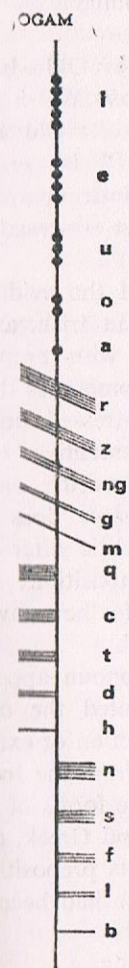
<sup>1</sup> Grammar 24-5.



Ir. *mend* 'stammering', and a few others.<sup>1</sup> It has since become clear that there is a much wider measure of affinity between Celtic and Indo-Iranian than Vendryes perceived; and the list of common words has been extended: Skr. *badhirá-* 'deaf': Ir. *bodar*, W. *byddar*; Skr. *dós-* (gen. *doṣṇāḥ*) 'fore-arm': Ir. *doe* (gen. *doat*); Skr. *druh-* 'evil spirit', Av. *druj*: Ir. *droch-* 'bad'; Skr. *vasati* 'dwells' in the special sense of cohabitation without marriage, which is also a common use of Ir. *foaid* 'spends the night'; Skr. *sasya* 'corn': G [s]asia 'barley'; Skr. *Sindhu*: Ir. *Sinnae* (gen. *Sinann*) 'Shannon'; Av. *sru-* 'horn, nail': Ir. *crú* 'hoof'; Skr. *tan f.* 'time, while': Ir. *tan f.*

In morphology the chief point of interest for the noun is the genitive singular masculine ending *-ī* which appears in both Irish and Latin and is thus an Italo-Celtic feature. The genitive singular of the Latin second declension ends in *-ī* in contrast to Gothic *-is*, Greek *-oio*, Sanskrit *-asya*: Lat. *uir* 'man', gen. *uirī*; Goth. *dags* 'day', gen. *dagis*; Greek *lógos* 'word', gen. *lógoio*, *lógoi*; Sanskrit *naráḥ* 'man', gen. *narasya*. An ending *-so*, *-siyo* will explain the Gothic, Greek and Sanskrit forms, but Latin shows a quite anomalous ending, which recurs in Gaulish and in the earliest Irish inscriptions. In Gaulish the gen. sg. occurs as *Dannotali*,

<sup>1</sup> P. Kretschmer, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der griechischen Sprache* 125 ff.; J. Vendryes, 'Les correspondances de vocabulaire entre l'indo-iranien et l'italo-celtique', MSL 20 (1917), 263 ff.



THE OLD IRISH  
OGAM ALPHABET

*Segomari*, etc.<sup>1</sup> in agreement with the Latin form. The earliest Irish inscriptions, which are written in the Ogam alphabet, are commonly in the form '(the stone) of X son of Y', that is to say, three nouns in the genitive; and nouns that are *o*-stems have the ending *-I*: DOVETI MAQQI CATTINI 'of Douetos son of Cattinos'; MAQQI QETTI MAQQI CUNITTI 'of the son of Qettos son of Cunittos'.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the *o*-stems in Old Irish, after original final vowels has been lost, show the effect of a final *-i*: *fer* 'man' < I-E *\*uiros*, gen. *fir* < *\*uirī*.

Wackernagel suggested long ago<sup>3</sup> that this ending might be identical with the *ī*-ending of *o*-stems in Sanskrit before the verbs *bhū* and *kr*: *stambhī-bhavati* 'becomes a post', *kṛṣṇī-karoti* 'makes black'; and this identification has been generally accepted. It may be an old adjectival ending, since genitive and adjective are akin. The link between Italo-Celtic and Sanskrit is important, although no special importance was attached to it at the time.

Another remarkable instance of agreement is in the inflexion of the numerals 'three' and 'four' for the feminine gender:

<sup>1</sup> G. Dottin, *Langue gauloise* 160, 162.

<sup>2</sup> CIIC 157 and 149.

<sup>3</sup> 'Genitiv und Adjektiv', *Mélanges Saussure* (Paris, 1908).



## Masculine

## Feminine

Sanskrit *trayaḥ*=Old Irish *trisraḥ*=Old Irish  
*tri* (Welsh *tri*) *teoir* (Welsh *tair*)

Sanskrit *catvāraḥ*=Old Irish *catasraḥ*=Old Irish  
*cethir* (Welsh *pedwar*) *cetheoir* (Welsh *pedair*)

This distinction is confined to Celtic and Indo-Iranian, and must be a very archaic survival: It was first observed by Pictet (p. 10).

It is, however, in the verb that most of the evidence for Indo-European origins has been found. In Irish, as in Sanskrit, verbs are commonly compounded with prepositions, and there may be several prepositions, sometimes three or four, of which the first is normally unstressed unless another particle (negative, interrogative, consecutive, etc.) precedes. If a particle precedes, the accent recedes on to the first preverb: *do-beir* 'brings, gives', *ní tabair* 'does not give'. A pronominal object is infixed as enclitic after the first preverb, which is thus not in close composition: *do-indnaig* 'conveys' (\*to-ind-anag.); *do-m-indnaig* 'he conveys me'; *ní-m thindnaig* 'he does not convey me'.<sup>1</sup>

In the Rigveda the Sanskrit personal pronoun appears in just the same position. Windisch illustrated the construction in the two languages with a full collection of examples, IF 14, 420, and argued that it must date from the Indo-European period, since it depends upon enclitic forms of the personal pronouns, such as we find in Vedic and Greek, and upon the loose composition of the verb with its preposition, dating from a time before preposition and verb had become one word.

<sup>1</sup> Grammar 255 ff.

The infixed pronouns of the first and second persons in Old Irish consist of the consonants *m* and *t* for the singular and *n* and *b* for the plural. They correspond to the Sanskrit enclitic forms *mā*, *tvā* and *nas*, *vas* respectively. As the singular forms lenite a following consonant, they must originally have ended in vowels, like *mā*, *tvā*; the plural forms do not lenite and must have ended in consonants like *nas*, *vas*. Here are some of the examples collected by Windisch, and some from Thurneysen's *Grammar of Old Irish*:

## Rigveda

Sg. 1 *ūn mā mamanda vṛṣabhāḥ* 'the bull delighted me' 2, 33, 6

*sā m mā tapanti* 'they torment me' 1, 105, 8

*adhi mā yanti paścāt* 'they follow me from behind' 8, 89, 1

2 *ā tvā śakyām* 'I would strengthen you' 10, 29, 3

*ūpa tvā sīdan* 'they sat beside you' 1, 65, 2

*nī tvā dadhe* 'I put you in' 3, 27, 10

## Old Irish

Sg. 1 *fo-m-chain* 'sings to me' Sg. 203

*fu-m-ré-se* 'he will help me' Thes. II 241.13 (Ardm. 18<sup>rb</sup> 23)

*ó do-m-áicc* 'since there came to me' Wb. 12 9

2 *to-t-churet(h)ar* 'they invite you' LU 10027

## Rigveda

Pl. 1 *ā no bhaja paramēsu ā vā'jeṣu madhyamēsu* 'let us share in the greatest good things and in those not so great' 1, 27, 5

*ūpa no yāhi* 'come to us!' 1, 135, 2

*ādhi no gāta* 'come (pl.) to us!' 8, 20, 22

2 *prā vaḥ śaṃsāmi* 'I praise you' 8, 27, 15

*ā vo gacchāti* 'there shall come to you' 7, 33, 14



## Old Irish

- Pl. 1 *hóre du-nn-áinic* 'since there has come to us' Wb. 25 21  
*aru-n-nethitis* 'they were awaiting us' Thes. I 497.43  
 2 *ro-b-car-si* 'he has loved you' Wb. 23<sup>a</sup> 4  
*co do-b-emthar-si* 'that you may be protected' Ml. 53<sup>b</sup> 15

Exactly the same construction appears with pronouns of the third person, but the forms are not so transparent. In Old Irish the masculine singular pronoun occurs as *a n-*:

## Rigveda

- Sg. *áinam nayat* 'he led him hither' 3, 9, 5  
*áinam gacchanti* 'they go to him' 10, 168, 2  
*úpāinam āddhvam* 'sit by him' 7, 33, 14

## Old Irish

- Sg. *imm-an-imcab* 'avoid him' Wb. 30<sup>a</sup> 20  
*da-rrat* 'he has given himself' Wb. 28<sup>b</sup> 4  
*ra-lléic* 'he has left him' Ml. 53<sup>b</sup> 6  
*fa-ceird* 'puts him' Ml. 94<sup>c</sup> 8

If a compound verb has more than one preposition, the pronoun follows the first preposition in Vedic and in Old Irish:

## Rigveda

- abhi no ni vartatam* 'let him turn to us' 1, 89, 2  
*úpa méhi (mā ā' ihi)* 'come to me' 10, 83, 6  
*ém (ā' im) enam pratyétana* 'go to meet him' 6, 42, 2

## Old Irish

- du-m-immerchell (to-imm-cell)* 'has surrounded me' Ml. 108<sup>a</sup> 12

*fo-t-rácbus-sa (fo-ad-gab-)* 'I have left you' Wb. 31<sup>b</sup> 1

The agreement between the two languages goes even further. If the sentence begins with a negative, the enclitic pronoun follows directly, and a compound verb in Irish follows in close composition: *ni-n- tánice (to-icc-)* 'he has not come to us' Wb. 1<sup>a</sup> 1; *arna-m tomnad-nammin duine (to-mon-)* 'that he should not think me not to be a man' 17<sup>a</sup> 23; *ni-n aithgeuin (aith-gnin-)* 'he did not recognise him' Ml. 52.

So in the Rigveda: *mā' no áti khyah* 'do not overlook us' 1, 4, 4; *mā' no martá abhi druhan* 'men should not harm us' 1, 5, 10.

These constructions are in accord with Wackernagel's Law, by which enclitics normally occupy the second place in the sentence.

We have been considering compound verbs and the position of the enclitic personal pronoun; and Vedic and Old Irish have shown close agreement. The behaviour of the infixed pronoun involved syntax, but we have not finished with morphology. There is a feature of morphology in the Irish verbal system which has been discussed, and which has recently been satisfactorily explained in the light of Vedic evidence.

The verb in Irish has two forms which are called 'absolute' and 'conjunct' respectively'. The absolute is the full form of the verb and is used when no preposition or 'conjunct' particle (negative, interrogative conditional, etc.) precedes. The absolute form thus never appears in a compound verb. The conjunct is normally a shorter form and is used in compounds or when a 'conjunct' particle precedes.

<sup>1</sup> Grammar 350.



The familiar Sanskrit verb *bharati* 'carries' < I-E \**bhereti* appears in Irish as *berid*, with loss of the original final *-i*. The *-d* is spirant, and it is still unvoiced and written *th* in the earliest texts. *Berid* (*berith*) 'carries' is the absolute form. But if the negative *ní* precedes, the form is *ní beir* 'does not carry'; and there is a compound *do-beir* 'brings, gives': *-beir* (< \**bheret*) is the conjunct form. Sanskrit *pibati* 'drinks' < I-E \**pibeti* is identical with Irish *ibid* 'drinks', and the negative in Irish is *ní ib*. Beside the Irish compound *as-oirc* 'smites' the simple verb occurs as *orcid* 'strikes, slays'.

This shorter ('conjunct') form differs from the absolute merely in the absence of the original final *-i*: IE \**bhereti* > OI *berid*; IE \**bheret* > OI *beir*. That is to say, the conjunct form of Old Irish is the old unmarked form of the verb, indifferent as to tense and mood, which Brugmann named 'injunctive' because it seemed in some passages of the Veda to have imperative force. But Thurneysen suggested long ago that the so-called 'injunctive' was really a primitive, undifferentiated form, dating from a time when tense and mood had not yet developed as clearly marked categories.<sup>1</sup> Gonda has studied the injunctive forms of the Veda<sup>2</sup> and concludes that they have neither tense nor mood, as Thurneysen said, a verdict supported by the widely differing translations by learned editors of a given form as preterite, future or imperative. He adds that prepositions, when compounded with these 'neutral and indeterminate'

<sup>1</sup> KZ 27, 172 ff. Cf. Renou: 'il s'agit d'une formation indifférenciée qui en son fond doit appartenir à la couche la plus ancienne des mantras', *Grammaire de la langue védique* 368.

<sup>2</sup> J. Gonda, *The Character of the Indo-European Moods* (Wiesbaden, 1956).

forms, can express aspectual, modal or temporal notions: *dechā kavim nṛmano gāh* 'Go to the sage, O manly-minded one!' RV 4, 16, 9; *prā mitrā'ya varuṇāya vocaḥ* 'announce to Miṭra and Varuṇa', 7, 62, 2; and the common formula *prā vocam* 'I proclaim'. But here he may be clinging to the established notion of the value of the injunctive, in spite of his own verdict.

The *-i* of the present indicative, as an enclitic 'here-and-now' particle, would occupy the second place by Wackernagel's Law, when the verb was initial (the emphatic position), and was excluded when a preverb preceded the verb, just as in Irish *berid* (< \**bhereti*) and *ní beir*, *do-beir* (< \**bheret*) above; and *-i* was also excluded when the verb was not initial. The system is breaking down in Vedic, since forms with *-i* commonly occur in both positions, initial and final, which are distinguished only by presence or absence of the accent. But the injunctive is never in initial position in Hoffmann's examples, and my friend Dr. Ghatage tells me that the injunctive is never initial in the Rīgveda, and corresponds in this to the Irish conjunct.<sup>1</sup>

Some of Gonda's examples agree in the use of 'conjunct' forms in compounds: *sāmyattam ná vi sparad*, *vyā'ttam ná śam yamat* 'what is shut does not open, what is open does not shut' AthV. 6, 56, 1; *idām havir yātudhā'nān nadī' phēnam* (*ivā' vahat*) 'this oblation brings the sorcerers as a stream brings foam', *ib.* 1, 8, 1; *tēna te tanve śam karam* 'with that I make weal for your body', *ib.* 1, 3, 1. In the first three instances, the compound verb has the injunctive (conjunct) form, and in the last the simple injunctive *karam* would be

<sup>1</sup> *Celtica*, VI 48; K. Hoffmann, *Die Injunktiv in Veda*, Heiddborg, 1967.



conjunct in Old Irish by Bergin's Law (v. inf.). Another example is: *ā' yād vām sūryā rātham/tiṣṭhad raghusyādam sādā* 'when Surya mounts your chariot always swift', RV 5, 73, 5, where *tiṣṭhad* is 'conjunct.'

But other examples show indicative ('absolute') forms compounded with prepositions; *gārbho bhārām bharaty ā' cid asya/rtām piparty ānrtam ni tārīt* 'the unborn one bears his burden: he even promotes truth and dispels falsehood', RV 1, 152, 3; *gatō nā'dhvā vi tirāti jantūm* 'as a well-trodden path may lead man', RV 7, 58, 3.

Further examples showing no agreement with Irish in the distribution of forms with and without *-i* occur in K. Hoffmann, *Der Injunktiv* 113 ff. Hoffmann seeks to show that the opposition between present indicative and injunctive is between an actual present and a general present (pp. 113 ff.), and the opposition between aorist indicative and injunctive is between an action completed in the past and one which extends into the present (resultative) or is not specified as perfective ('allgemeingültig'), pp. 214 ff. He maintains that the proper use of the injunctive is merely to mention an action ('Erwähnung'), not to report it ('Bericht'). His discussion does not appear to me to invalidate Renou's view that the injunctive is a primitive undifferentiated form (*sup.* p. 41, n. 1). It can be opposed to a marked present (with *-i*) or a marked aorist (with *a-*). In Irish the opposition became paradigmatic in the period when *-i* was still treated as enclitic.

The opposition in Irish (and Welsh) of absolute and conjunct forms in the present indicative conforms to Wackernagel's Law, whereas the generalisation of *-i* in Sanskrit and Greek (*dadhāmi=tithemi*) is due to univerbation of verb

and suffix, *-i* being no longer treated as an enclitic particle. That is to say that Irish is more conservative even than Vedic. This involves the assumption that originally the Indo-European form with final *-i* stood first in the sentence as a 'marked' form, which is quite acceptable. It is the type *pārāyāmi tvā rdjasā* 'I preserve you from darkness', AV 8, 2, 9, apparently not uncommon in Vedic. But in Vedic, as in Greek, the form in *-i* is no longer confined to initial position, as it is in Irish.

Even if the Irish system were not the original system, the preservation of the old unmarked ('injunctive') form as a normal part of the present tense would be a strong link between Old Irish and the oldest parts of the Veda. And Irish has preserved this proto-Indo-European verbal form as an integral part of the paradigm, whereas in Vedic it is already only a vestigial survival.<sup>1</sup>

There are a few details of verbal inflexion which show exact correspondence between Irish (or Welsh) and Sanskrit: *-dnac* 'I reached' is identical with Sanskrit perf. sg. 1 *ānamśā* 'I attained', cf. Greek *ē'negkon* 'I carried', where the ending is that of a thematic aorist; and Welsh *cigleu* 'I heard', where *i* must go back to a long *ū* (\**kūkloua*), with the same form of reduplication as in *tūtāva* 'he is strong' beside pres. sg. 3 *tavīti*.

<sup>1</sup> The explanation of the conjunct in Old Irish, on which my argument is based, was discovered independently by Calvert Watkins, *Celtica* 6 (1963), pp. 41 ff., and Wolfgang Meid, *Die indogermanischen Grundlagen der absoluten und konjunktiven Verbalinflexion* (Wiesbaden, 1963). Zimmer had indeed proposed that the Irish distributive of absolute and conjunct endings was the original Indo-European system, KZ 30, 119 n. 1.



As in these points of morphology, so also in the syntax of the verb there is affinity between Vedic and Old Irish, and the agreement here is close and perhaps more important for the restoration of the Indo-European system.

It is well known as characteristic of Irish that the verb normally stands first in its clause.<sup>1</sup> This is true for all periods of the language since the time of the Würzburg Glosses, which date from the eighth century; and it has been explained as a result of the univertation of compound verbs, of which the first preverb was originally separable, as in Vedic (*v. sup.*) and commonly stood in initial position. Vendryes put forward this explanation of the initial position of the verb long ago.<sup>2</sup> Watkins discusses the matter in *Celtica* 6, 36 ff.; 40-41.

The earliest sources, law-tracts and archaic verse, preserve an earlier system, which is clearly anterior to the initial position of the verb. It was well known that in verse the verb sometimes appeared elsewhere in the sentence, and in particular there were examples of tmesis: *no-m Choimmdiu coíma* 'the Lord cherishes me', where the normal order would be *no-m choíma Coimmdiu*; *for-don itge Brigte bet* 'on us be Brigit's prayers', instead of *for-don bet itge Brigte*. But Bergin first observed a construction in which the verb followed the subject or object of the sentence and was inflected in the dependent form, conjunct of a simple verb or prototonic of a compound.<sup>1</sup> What then seemed important, and what Bergin stressed, was the fact that when

<sup>1</sup> *Grammar* p. 327. As we have just seen, the old 'marked' form of the present indicative of the simple verb in Indo-European may have been confined to initial position.

<sup>2</sup> *MSL* 17 (1912), 337 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ériu* 12 (1938), 197 ff; *Grammar* 327.

the verb was not initial, it took the dependent form. It was Calvert Watkins who perceived the full significance of Bergin's Law, as it has come to be known; and he was guided by studies of Vedic syntax made by Gonda and Kurylowicz.

It had long been held that in Sanskrit, as in Latin, the verb normally stood at the end of its clause.<sup>1</sup> Gonda examined the facts in detail, and while he made a number of reservations and qualifications, his results confirm the doctrine: 'In most of the texts examined, final position of the verb is the most frequent', *Remarques sur la place du verbe* (Utrecht, 1952), 67. In a later book he showed that where other words did follow the verb they merely amplified the sentence, which was grammatically complete without them.<sup>2</sup>

Kurylowicz had examined the syntax of compound verbs, with regard to the position of the preverb, and stated his conclusion as follows: 'For the main clause, in which the conditions at first seem less clear, there are in effect only two possible types: either the preverb is separated from the verb and stands first in the sentence without the verb following directly; or else the preverb, wherever it stands, directly precedes the verb'.<sup>3</sup>

It will be seen that these two types correspond to the two constructions in archaic Old Irish noted above, tmesis and Bergin's Law. Moreover, as Gonda showed for

<sup>1</sup> Wackernagel, *IF* 1, 427; Kieckers, *Die Stellung des Verbs im Griechischen* (1911) 1, 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Four Studies in the Language of the Veda* (The Hague, 1959), pp. 7 ff.

<sup>3</sup> 'Les formes verbales composées du Rigveda', *Bulletin Sor. Pol. de Linguistique* (1936), 39 ff.



Sanskrit, Watkins has shown for Irish that in both constructions, as for the simple verb, the verb normally stands at the end of its clause. And these types, while they survive only vestigially in classical Old Irish, and were thought to be irregular and exceptional, now appear as the normal 'unmarked' forms in the archaic period, with an alternative where the verb stands first as a 'marked' emphatic form. In the case of compounds, the choice between tmesis, with a preverb in initial position, and Bergin's Law, with a prototonic form at the end, may have depended upon the degree of emphasis required by the subject or object, or by some adverbial phrase. The similarity of the Vedic and Irish usage will appear from examples:

## Tmesis

## Vedic

*Brahmaṇopa māsmīn yajñe hvayasva* 'O brahman, call me to the sacrifice!' Aitbr, 39, 8, 3.

*āchā kavīṃ nṛmaṇo gāḥ* 'Go to the sage, manly-minded one'; RV 4, 16, 9.

*prā mitrā'ya vāruṇāya vocaḥ* 'Proclaim to Mitra and Varuṇa', 7, 62, 2.

*prā yād etē pratarām pūrvyām guḥ* 'When these formerly went further forth', AthV. 5, 1, 4.

## Irish

*for-don itge Brigitte bet* 'May the prayers of Brigit protect us!' v. sup.

*at márchathae fri cricha comnāmat -curetar* 'Great battalions are sent back against the lands of the enemies'. ZCP 13, 299, 2, (*ad-curetar*).

## Final Position of the Compound Verb

## Vedic

*mā' no yajñā'd antār gata* 'Do not exclude us from the sacrifice!' ŚB 1, 6, 1, 1.

*sa indriyēṇa somapīthēna vy ārdhyata* 'he was robbed of his strength, the drink of soma'. TS 2, 3, 2, 6.

*gharmāsvaraso nadyò āpa vran* 'the rivers, rushing with the hot sacrificial drink, have opened.' RV 4, 55, 6.

*tā enam ubhāye devā'ḥ prītā'ḥ svargām lokām abhi vahanti* 'both groups of gods lead him gladly to the heavenly world', ŚB 13, 2, 11, 3.

*etām évāhaṃ brahmópaśe* 'this I revere as brahma', *ib.* 14, 5, 1, 2.

*kṛṣṇām niyā'nam hārayaḥ suparṇā' apó vāsānā divam út patanti* 'the yellow birds fly up on a black path to heaven where they are surrounded by water', RV 1, 164, 47.

*āthā sapātnān indrāgnī' me|viśūcī'nān vy*

do ye, Indra and Agni, scatter my enemies in all directions', TS 1, 6, 4, 2.

## Irish

*fintiu for cúl cuindegar* 'hereditary land is claimed back'.

Thurneysen *et al.*, *Studies in Early Irish Law*, 143 (*condegar*).

*óenchairde fon Eilg n-áragar* 'one peace-treaty is established throughout Ireland', O'Davoren's Glossary 768 (*ad-regar*).

*robarta tonn tuargabar* 'a flood-tide of waves is raised up', Ériu 7, 2 § 2 (*do-furcabar*).

*go sechthadh fodhail fuirmither* 'it is established up to the seventh division', Ériu 13, 30, 26 (*fo-rimther*).



*la triuna tuaithe tiomargad* 'he was constrained by the strong men of the tribe', *Ériu* 13, 14. 6.

This agreement in syntax between Vedic and Old Irish is a striking example of lateral survival of an archaic feature of language. It must be said that almost all the Irish examples are from verse texts, and Wagner has rejected the notion that these two constructions, tmesis and final position of the compound verb in prototonic form, are archaic survivals of original Indo-European patterns.<sup>1</sup> He would explain them as forms of poetic diction based upon alliteration and rhythm, and there is no denying that all the Irish examples presented here show alliteration, and almost all have a strongly marked rhythm, seven syllables, of which three are fully stressed, ending in a trisyllable. I can only say that an oral tradition naturally depends upon verse, which is more easily memorised than prose. The facts that these constructions are preserved in texts that derive from oral tradition, as in fact they do (the earliest sources we have), and their agreement with the Vedic forms are sufficient evidence for their priority. The initial position of the verb, both simple and compound, in later Old Irish, is probably best explained as a secondary development, not as the result of a non-Indo-European substratum as Pokorny said.<sup>2</sup> Wagner, however, prefers the substratum.

Taken together, the points of morphology and syntax

<sup>1</sup> See W. Meid (ed.), *Beiträge zur Indogermanistik und Keltologie* (Innsbruck, 1967), 189 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Pokorny, *Die Sprache* 1, 238; V 154; *Münchener Studien* 16, 75 ff. Greene agrees with Watkins, *The Irish Language* (Dublin, 1966) 45, and so does W. Dressler, *KZ* 83 (1969), 19 (with full ref.).

presented here amount to strong evidence for the survival east and west of ancient Indo-European forms. While there are traces in Hittite of the same system, Vedic and Old Irish are the only languages to preserve fully the Indo-European tradition, and they must have been separated geographically for more than three thousand years. They satisfy in this respect the requirement of Pedersen stated at the beginning of this chapter.

Finally, there is the analogy between Sanskrit as a canonical language used by the brahmins all over India without differences of dialect, and Old Irish where also the language shows no sign of dialectal differences.

We shall see that in literature and in social institutions similar correspondences can be shown, and it is my belief that they too can best be explained as deriving from an old Indo-European inheritance.



## COURT POETRY AND HEROIC TRADITION

## (i) Poetry

The praise of famous men was already a recognised theme for poetry in the Vedic period. It may well have been the earliest Indo-European literary form. The research of Theodor Bergk<sup>1</sup> showed that poetry, lyric in form and heroic in content, songs in praise of princes and their ancestors, is the earliest known form of literature in India and in Greece. Homer speaks of *kléa andrôn* 'songs in praise of warriors' (*aéide d'ára kléa andrôn* 'he sang the famous deeds of men', II.9, 189; cf. 254; Od. 8, 73)<sup>2</sup>, and *nārāsaṃsyaḥ* (with the same meaning) are an important part of the earliest Vedic poetry. Adalbert Kuhn called attention long ago to the correspondence between Vedic *ākṣīti śrávas* 'undying fame' and Greek *áphthiton kléos* with the same meaning, and suggested that these terms must belong to a common Indo-European tradition of heroic

<sup>1</sup> 'Über das älteste Versmass der Griechen', *Opuscula Philologica* 2, 392 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Meillet suggested emending to '*klée*' *andron*, see *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship*, p. 18.

poetic diction;<sup>3</sup> and it has since been shown that Greek lyric metres and also Slavonic and Irish metres can be traced to the same origin as the metres of the Ríveda.<sup>4</sup> We are therefore justified in assuming the existence in the Indo-European period of lyric poetry in praise of warriors.

The earliest examples of this praise-poetry are found in the Ríveda itself as *dāna-stuti* 'praise for a gift'. The term *nārāsaṃsī* does occur in the Ríveda (10, 85, 6), but the earliest examples that can strictly be so called are found in the Aitareya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas. They have been edited and translated by Horsch in his admirable book *Die vedische Gāthā- und Śloka-litteratur* (pp. 99 ff.; 140 ff.). They usually consist of single quatrains, in one instance four (or five) together, in which the brave or generous deeds of a king long since dead are praised. The form called *dāna-stuti* 'praise for gifts' is classed separately in the Brāhmaṇas, but is not always readily to be distinguished. When the emphasis is on valour and victory in battle, rather than on gifts to the brahmins, the form is *nārāsaṃsī*. And these poems were recited at the king's consecration (*rājasūya*) and at the horse-sacrifice. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that on the evening of the first day of the horse-sacrifice, a lute-player chants three stanzas (*gāthās*)<sup>1</sup> in honour of the

<sup>1</sup> KZ 2 (1853). See now R. Schmidt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1967) 61 ff.

<sup>2</sup> A. Meillet, *Les Origines indo-européennes des metres grecs* (Paris, 1923), R. Jakobson, 'Studies in Comparative Slavic Metrics', *Oxford Slavonic Papers* (1952), 21-66; C. Watkins 'Indo-European Metrics and Archaic Irish Verse', *Celtica* 6 (1963), 194 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The word *gāthā* is identical with Avestic *gāpā*, and therefore dates from the Indo-Iranian period.



king, on the theme: 'You have fought a war, you have won a battle'.<sup>2</sup> In another passage<sup>3</sup> we are told that a lute-player and a nobleman (*rājanya*) sing *gāthās* in praise of the king for a whole year, the lute-player praising his generosity by day, the *rājanya* praising his heroic deeds by night. Here we have evidence of a distinct class of secular poets whose theme was valour and victory in battle.

These poets were the *sūtas*, professional court-poets, whose duties are described in the Purāṇas: 'The *sūta's* special duty, as perceived by good men of old, was to preserve the genealogies of gods, rishis and glorious kings and the traditions of great men'.<sup>1</sup> Kautālyā says that every king should have a *sūta* in his household.<sup>2</sup> He enjoyed high standing among the officials of the court; he ranked next to the king's brother and was one of the 'kingmakers' (*rājakṛtāḥ*), who took part in the king's consecration. He was the royal herald, and in later documents the king's charioteer and his intimate friend.<sup>3</sup> It is not clear whether he is to be classed as brahmin or kshatriya, and the sources are themselves ambiguous. According to Manu (10, 11) he was the son of a brahmin by a kshatriya wife,<sup>4</sup> which seems to be mere invention.

The *sūta* may have been a kshatriya, but kshatriya and brahmin seem to have shared the learned tradition in the

<sup>2</sup> ŚB 13, 4, 3, 5; trs. Eggeling, SBE 44, 364; Horsch, 282.

<sup>3</sup> ŚB 13, 1, 5, 2-5; trs. Eggeling, *ibid.* 285.

<sup>1</sup> Vāyu-Purāṇa I 31-2, trsl. Pargiter 15. For the status of the *sūta* see Horsch 422; Gonda, *Kingship*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Arthaśāstra V. 3.

<sup>3</sup> This may explain the status of the charioteer in Irish saga, as exemplified by Loeg mac Riagabra, charioteer to Cú Chulainn, who was more companion than servant to his master.

Vedic period. Horsch refers to the 'old and unsolved problem of the importance of the kshatriyas for the cultural history of India', and adds that the share of the kshatriyas in the literature that he is discussing is enormous, greater than that of the brahmins.<sup>5</sup> He suggests that kshatriyas may even have attained the dignity of appointment as *purohita* or royal chaplain and court-poet (429), and goes on to discuss the part played by kshatriyas in the development of the doctrine of the Upanishads (427-43).

The matter is beyond my competence and I am concerned only to point to the obscurity which still hangs over the origin of brahminism and the division between sacred and secular learning. In Ireland too the distinction between *fili* and *bard* presents a problem, and it may be that one was heir to a sacred, the other to a secular tradition, and that the Irish *fili* like the Hindu brahmin succeeded in establishing his social superiority. Horsch suggests that the brahmin got the upper hand in the end partly because he was the custodian of sacred scripture and decided what was sacred, so that he controlled the whole corpus of tradition, both *śruti* and *smṛti*. This reasoning may be instructive for the study of Irish conditions too.<sup>1</sup> But the decline in status of the kshatriya may be connected with the decline of Buddhism in India. The Buddha was himself a kshatriya, and Buddhist texts give precedence to his caste.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Horsch, p. 422-23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 427-8.

<sup>1</sup> The king's priestly functions have been taken over by a special caste, the Druids, and one is tempted to see here a certain parallel with India, where the Brahmins replaced the rajahs as hierophants', Binchy, *Celtic Kingship* 15.

<sup>2</sup> Horsch, pp. 44-41, 444; Bühler, JRAS 1897, 585 ff.



An example of *nārāśamsī* cited by Horsch is the song in honour of the great king Bharata:

*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 8, 23, 3 (39, 9, 3-7), ed. Aufrecht 230 = trsl. Keith 338

hiranyena parivṛtā Bharata gave at Maṣṇāra  
kr̥ṣṇāñ chukladato mṛgān black beasts with white tusks,  
Maṣṇāre Bharato 'dadāc covered with golden trappings  
chatam badvāni sapta ca a hundred and seven my-  
riads.

Bharatasyaīṣa Dauṣṇanter This fire of Bharata  
agniḥ Sacīguṇe citāḥ Dauṣṇanti was heaped up at  
yasmin sahasram brāhmaṇā Sacīguṇa, where a thousand  
badvaśo gā vibhejire Brahmins shared cows in my-  
riads.

nodāpuḥ pañca mānavāḥ. Bharata Dauṣṇanti tied  
aṣṭasaptatim Bharato seventy-eight horses (to the  
Dauṣṇantir Yamunām anu posts) on the Yamunā: on the  
Gaṅgāyām Vṛtraghne Ganges he tied fifty-five  
'badhnāt horses for Indra.  
pañcapanāśatam hayān

trayastrīṁśac chatam rājā After he had tied one  
aśvān baddhvāya medhyān hundred and thirty-three  
Dauṣṇantir atyagād rājño horses for the sacrifice, King  
[a] mayān<sup>1</sup> māyāvattaraḥ Dauṣṇanti overcame by his  
magic the powerless kings.

<sup>1</sup> sic leg. with SB 13, 5, 4, 12 (ed. Weber 995)

mahākarma Bharatasya Neither those who went  
na pūrve nāpare janāḥ before, nor those who came  
divam martya iva after him of the five peoples  
hastabhyam (of the earth) could equal the  
great deed of Bharata, no more  
than a mortal can touch  
Heaven with his hands.

This is more *dāna-stuti* than *nārāśamsī*, more brahminical than kshatriyan, but the two are not always distinct. A truer example is the song for Bharata in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13, 5, 4, 13 (ed. Weber 995 = trsl. Eggeling 399):

Śakūntalā Nādapīty At Nādapit the Apsaras  
apsarā Bharatām dadhe Śakūntalā conceived Bharata,  
pāraḥsahasrān Indrāya who after conquering the  
śśvān médhyān yā āharad whole earth brought to Indra  
vijītya pṛthivīm sārvaṁ more than a thousand horses  
for the sacrifice.

It is generally believed that these songs in praise of famous men are the source from which heroic poetry developed. The old eulogies have been traced in the Purāṇas and in the Mahābhārata,<sup>1</sup> and the tradition has survived into modern times. Writing in about 1830, on the customs of Rajasthan, Colonel Tod described the 'Bardās' as the great recorders of fame and liberality, whose satire was so dreaded by the princes that they would rather impoverish themselves than incur the poet's displeasure.<sup>2</sup> And he goes on to say

<sup>1</sup> Pargiter 16; Horsch 441 and 442 n. 2.; GIL I 329 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For Satire by Irish poets see p. 128.



that the Chāraṇs and Bhāṭs, or bards and genealogists, were the chief carriers in that country. 'Their sacred character overawes the lawless Rajput chief; and even the savage Kholi and Bhil ... dread the anathema of these singular races, who conduct the caravans through the wildest and most desolate regions.'<sup>3</sup> 'The Chāraṇs are the sacred order of these regions [Bikaner]; the warlike tribes esteem the heroic lays of the bard more than the homily of the Brahman. The Chāraṇs are throughout revered by the Rathors, and hold lands literally on the tenure of "an old song".'<sup>1</sup> In Rajasthan there is to this day a caste of Bhāṭs, professional poets and genealogists, who come to an initiation ceremony or a wedding and recite the genealogies of the families concerned. The Bardic and Historical Survey of Rajputana, directed by L. P. Tessitori, and published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1914 to 1919, provides precious evidence of the extent to which it has survived in that country.<sup>2</sup> The same is true, I am told, in the Panjab.

The practice derives, no doubt, from the *nārāśamsī* of Vedic times, although I cannot show a continuous tradition, and it has to do with a belief in the power of words. By declaring the famous deeds of a prince and of his ancestors, the poet brings him not merely honour but prosperity. By satirising him he may destroy him.<sup>3</sup>

As regards the earliest form of this praise-poetry, as we find it in Vedic, it can be said that it is syllabic verse,

<sup>3</sup> James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* II 742, 813.

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.* 1148.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *inf.* p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Gonda, *The Character of the Indo-European Moods* 39; and *inf.* 107, 128.

lyric in form and heroic in content. Meillet in his *Origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs* compared the early Greek and Vedic poems, and was able to establish with probability the common Indo-European form from which both derive (*sup.* p. 52).

The history of encomiastic poetry among the Celts in Gaul and later in Ireland is closely similar. Diodorus tells us of the Gauls that 'they have also lyric poets whom they call Bards. They sing to the accompaniment of instruments resembling lyres sometimes a eulogy and sometimes a satire' (*sup.* p. 24). And there is a well known account by Posidonius of Louernios as he drove in his chariot being greeted by a poet with an ode praising his generosity. Louernios threw him a purse of gold, and the poet resumed his song, saying that the very tracks of the king's chariot brought bounty to mankind.<sup>1</sup>

The oldest fragments of Irish verse have been collected by Kuno Meyer in his *Aelteste irische Dichtung*. They are poems lyric in form and heroic in content, not unlike the stanzas from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa quoted above. Indeed, Vedic tradition may explain them. They are found often as single quatrains, sometimes a small group, scattered through annals and genealogies, and the question arises as to whether they are fragments of longer poems. Moreover they are often about mythical heroes of a distant past.<sup>2</sup> I would now suggest that these oldest Irish quatrains are true *nārāśamsyah*, that is to say, stanzas composed by the bards to be

<sup>1</sup> Athenaeus IV 37; W. Dinan, *Monumenta Historica Celtica* 1, 337; J. Tierney *PRIA* 60. C. 248.

<sup>2</sup> The *Nārāśamsīs* treat the Bharatas as rulers belonging to an almost mythical past, Horsch, p. 257.



recited on the occasion of a king's inauguration, and on so solemn an occasion as the holding of *Feis Temro*, the Feast of Tara, by the High-King.<sup>3</sup> We know very little about the actual rite of inauguration,<sup>4</sup> and the recitation of such ritual stanzas would be a likely procedure.

Besides these shorter poems in praise of famous kings, there are longer poems called *fursundud* ('illumination'), which consist of lists of the kings of a province or of a dynasty; and these too may be ritual poems which were recited at the king's inauguration. Meyer edited four examples, which are the only ones known to me.<sup>1</sup> Two are attributed to *Laidcenn mac Baircheda*, supposed to have been court-poet to Niall of the Nine Hostages (+ 405), one to *Find Fili*, a legendary king of Leinster, and one to *Luccreth moccu Chiara*, but these attributions are not to be taken seriously.

The first three poems are about kings of Leinster. The first is a list in twenty-two quatrains of Leinster kings who were also supposedly kings of Ireland; the second is a verse genealogy in fifty-four quatrains of the kings of Leinster from *Enna Censelach* (fl. 450 A.D.) back to *Mil* and then back to Adam; the third is a similar genealogy in fifty-two quatrains from *Nuadu Necht*<sup>2</sup> who appears in § 7 of the second. These two cover the same ground from § 7 onwards,

<sup>3</sup> This rite was performed probably only once in his reign, see Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History*, 334 f.; Binchy, *Eriu* 18, 132 f.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 108-113.

<sup>1</sup> K. Meyer, *Über die älteste irische Dichtung I* (Berlin, APAW 1913 No. 6).

<sup>2</sup> O'Rahilly identifies him with Elcmaire (Elcmar) as god of the river Boyne, *EIHM* 320, 516.

but they are not in exact agreement. In the third there is a long passage, §§ 21-32, in praise of *Labraid Loingsech*.

The fourth poem deals with the genealogy of *Gú Cen Máthair*, king of Cashel (+ 665), and so with the great dynasty of the *Eóganacht*. It joins the second at § 14 with *Mil* (= § 32 of poem II), so that the poems may be regarded as old oral tradition. It is followed by six supplementary passages which provide genealogies for six other branches of the *Eóganacht*, joining the main poem at § 3. These supplements are plainly intended to make the main poem fit for recitation at the courts of each of these kings respectively.<sup>1</sup>

We can thus distinguish two classes in these earliest examples of Irish verse, short praise-poems, some of them preserved only as single quatrains, in honour of famous royal ancestors, and long memorial poems reciting the genealogy of the king, or the names of his predecessors. One of the most famous of these royal ancestors was the legendary *Labraid Loingsech Moen*, ancestor of the Lagen, who came over the sea with foreigners and destroyed *Dinn Ríg*, the stronghold perhaps of the Manapii before the Lagen came there.<sup>2</sup> He was supposed to have become king of Ireland and Scotland, and 'none other of the kings of Ireland attained to the same power as Labraid'.<sup>3</sup> It would appear that songs in praise of him were traditional at royal inaugurations in Leinster, for we have several very early praise-poems, earlier than the genealogical poems just mentioned, composed in his honour. Moreover, as we have seen, he is exalted above

<sup>1</sup> See *Celtica* 10, p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> *EIHM* 24 n. 5; 101 ff.; CGH 17 f.

<sup>3</sup> CGH 19.



the other kings in one of the Leinster poems.<sup>4</sup> Here are quatrains first written perhaps in the sixth century in his honour:

Dinn Ríg ruad, Tuaim Tenbad Trichait n-airech, fo brón bebsait.	Mighty Dinn Ríg, Tuaim Tenbad Thirty noblemen, they died miserably.
Brúisius bréosus bárnía lonn Labraid Láth Elggae Ua Luirc Loegaire.	He crushed and burned them, the fierce warrior Labraid Ireland's hero, grandson of Loegaire Lorc.
Lugaid lóeg lonn Sanb Sétna Sochla Coel Cobthach Mál Muiredach.	Beloved Lugaid, fierce Sanb, Sétna, Famous Cobthach Coel, Muiredach Mál.
Mandrais armu athar athar Ollomon Oirt Moen maccu áin Augaine	He destroyed the weapons of Ollam's ancestor: Moen slew the sons of noble Augaine.

That poem is attributed in the genealogies to Ferchertne Fili.<sup>1</sup> Another poem in honour of Labraid is attributed to Find Fili:<sup>2</sup>

Moen oen ó ba noed ort rígu, rout án,	níba nós arbrig ua Luirc Labraid
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<sup>4</sup> For the legend of Labraid Loingsech see EIHM, 101-117.

<sup>1</sup> AID II p. 6=CGH 18.

<sup>2</sup> AID II p. 10=CGH 1.

Láithe gaile Galián Lagin de sin	gabsat ina lámaib laigne slóg Galián glonnach
Glinnait coicthe iar loingis Lochet fian	cota ler lerggae iath nÉremóin flaith Goídel gabsus
Grib indrid iath n-anéoil arddu doenib	hua Luircc Loegaire acht oenrí nime
Or ós gréin gelmair dia oen as Moen	gabais for doínib domnaib sceo déib mac Áine oenríg

'Moen the only one, since he was a child — not as a high-king — slew kings, a splendid throw, Labraid grandson of Lorc.

The warriors of the Galián took lances into their hands: from that they are called Lagin, the brave host of the Galián.

They won battles as far as (?) the shores of the lands of Éremón.

After his exile, Lochet the Exile seized the lordship of the warriors of the Gael.

A griffin who invaded strange countries was the grandson of Loegaire Lorc, higher than all men, save only the holy King of Heaven.

Gold brighter than the sun, he became lord of men and gods: the one god is Moen, son of Aine the king.

At least one more poem of the same kind about Labraid Loingsech has been preserved in the genealogies:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CGH p. 19=AID II 23.



Lug scéith,	scál find
fo nimib ní robe	bed mac nAine aidblithir
Arddu déib doen	dron daurgrainne
glan gablach	Ua Luirc Loegaire

'Hero of the shield, bright phantom. Under heaven there was none so mighty as the son of Aine.

A man higher than the gods, a stout acorn, clean and fruitful, was the grandson of Loegaire Lorc.'

Several other Leinster kings of the early period are honoured by the poets. Here is a poem about Eochu, son of Énna Censelach, who was supposed to have slain Niall of the Nine Hostages in 405:

'Eochu, a warrior who delights in single combat, who would wrest a secret from a world of enemies, he leads bands of warriors under the emblems of the sons of Labraid.

The grandson of Bressal Bélach is a strong arm in battle, Ireland's champion, a blameless hero who slew his enemies, a terror to humble the pride of warriors.

Bright mill-stone that crushes blameless heroes, ground of destructive slaughter is the powerful son of Ethne, grandson of Corc of Carman'.<sup>1</sup>

The annals, as well as the genealogies, contain many such short poems, and many or most of them could be classed as *nārāśamsyah*, verses fit to be sung at the inauguration of the king. I suggest that the *fursundud*, a recital of the king's pedigree, and these shorter poems, for which there is no technical term in Irish, formed part of

<sup>1</sup> AID II 22.

the rite of inauguration in Ireland, as the *dāna-stuti* and *nārāśamsī* did in India.

While the Indian evidence may explain some facts of Irish tradition, the rich evidence may be of interest to students of Sanskrit poetry. The bardic profession was hereditary, and bardic families established themselves, at least in the later period (from the thirteenth century), of whom some came to enjoy high renown.<sup>2</sup> O'Higgins, Ward and O'Hussey were three of the greatest names. The O'Higgins were bards to O'Connor Sligo and O'Donnell, the Wards to the O'Donnells of Tyrconnell, and the O'Husseys to the maguires of Fermanagh and to the O'Donnells. The Magraths were bards to the O'Briens of Thomond, the O'Dalys to the O'Sullivans, and the Keoghs to the MacMurroughs. In Scotland the MacVurichs were the greatest bardic family, and they were bards to MacDonald of Clanranald.

One detail of Irish poetic tradition was the setting of one half of a quatrain by someone and the composing of the second half by someone else. This is a motif in the saga *Fingal Rónáin*, and it appears also in Cormac's Glossary s.v. *prull*. We know that in India, in the time of the Guptas, meetings of poets were held (*sabhā*) where poems were recited, or even composed, in competition. A feature of these meetings was a competition called *samasyā-pūraṇa* ('completing the stanza'), in which the beginning of a quatrain was given to the competitors and they had to com-

<sup>2</sup> On the family bard see E. Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall O Huiginn* I xli; J. Carney, *The Irish Bardic Poet* (Dallin, 1967).



plete it.<sup>1</sup> This agreement may be mere coincidence, but it may well be a tiny part of the large whole.

Vendryes discussed the bardic poetry of Ireland and Wales in a lecture delivered at the Institut de France years ago,<sup>2</sup> and showed that it was an ancient Celtic inheritance. Posidonius tells us that 'The Celts have in their company even in war companions whom they call 'parasites'. These pronounce their praises before the whole assembly, and before each of them in turn as they listen. Their entertainers are those who are called Bards, and these are poets who pronounce their eulogies in song.'<sup>3</sup>

In both Wales and Ireland we find in the Middle Ages, professional poets who formed a privileged class of society, divided into several grades of dignity. The term *bard* survives in both languages, and is the common Celtic word, for Suidas tells us that it was used also by the Galatians. In Wales the *pencerdd* 'chief poet' and the *bardd teulu* 'household bard' were the two highest dignitaries. In Ireland the general term was *fili*, and the highest grade of *fili* was the *ollam*. The term *bard* was used for a lesser sort of poet, but this must be a secondary distinction. (The *ollam* was equal in dignity to a king or a bishop).

The duty of the Welsh *bardd* and the Irish *fili* was to praise his patron, to preserve the family genealogy, to know by heart the myths and legends that formed a great part of their hereditary wisdom, and of course to hand on the tradition. The Irish metrical tracts state the various grades

<sup>1</sup> L. Renou, *Hist. de la langue Sanscrite* 164; R. Pischel, *Hofdichter* 4 and 28; *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, chap. 10, transl. Renou, pp. 144-48. Keith, *Sanskrit Lit.* 53; Aufrechi, *ZDMG* 27, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *La poésie de cour en Irlande et en Galles*, Paris, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> Athenaeus VI 49.

of the poet and the knowledge required of each grade, the number of tales he must know and the metres he may use. The Welsh laws prescribe the gifts of clothing, horses or land that a poet might demand of his master, the tariff for a poem, the place that he occupied at table, the compensation to be paid for a wrong done to him.

The poets used a highly artificial language, archaic in vocabulary and syntax and full of metaphor. Their diction has been discussed by Parry-Williams in his *Rhys Lecture, Welsh Poetic Diction*.<sup>1</sup> The metres are measured by syllables, not by rhythm or quantity, only the cadence being fixed. They are rich in ornament of rhyme, assonance and alliteration. Vendryes says: 'There are poets that are obscure, but for obscurity Celtic poetry takes the palm. It is obscure because, by tradition, the poets wished to keep it so. It conceals as much as it suggests, perhaps more, a sort of game in which the poet reveals himself just enough to escape as soon as you think you have caught him. At this game the Celtic poets were passed masters.' So too were the court-poets of India.<sup>2</sup> And this art of suggestion, 'the half-said thing', as Meyer puts it, in describing ancient Irish poetry,<sup>3</sup> was a well defined and treasured quality of Sanskrit

<sup>1</sup> PBA 32 (1946).

<sup>2</sup> See E. Knott, *Irish Classical Poetry* (Dublin, 1957) 46 ff. In India the poets defeat the gods in diction by means of paradox and hidden meaning, for the gods love the obscure (they are *parokṣa-priyāḥ*), and hate the obvious (they are *pratyakṣa-dviṣṭāḥ*). Brh. Up. 4, 2, 2. The recognized opposition between ordinary and poetic language is discussed by Watkins, 'Language of Gods and Language of Men', in J. Pühvel (ed.) *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans* (University of California Press, 1970) pp. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> K. Meyer, *Ancient Irish Poetry*, p. xiii.



poetry. It is known as *dhvani* ('Tone'), that which is not expressed in words; and it is the subject of a famous treatise, the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānanda-vardhana (c. 850 A.D.), which Jacobi translated, ZDMG 56 and 57.

(Ānanda-vardhana says that a good poem must have two things, that which is said in words and fittingly adorned in diction, and that which is unsaid and must be imagined by the hearer. This that is unsaid is the true soul of poetry. And he distinguishes three grades of poetry: the first in which *dhvani* is dominant; the second in which it is subordinate; and the third from which it is absent, and where poetic diction and ornament are the objects of the poet's endeavour.)

In India as in Ireland the poet was also the official historian. He was the custodian of the traditions of the past, and recorded them in long historical poems. Winternitz says of the Indian historical poems:

'History in India was always only a branch of poetry: chronicles in which myth and history appear mixed together, or biographical and historical epics and romances, or mere praise-poems about kings, with historical or semi-historical content. For the Indian historian pursues an end quite different from that of the Greek or Roman historian. He does not seek to discover the sequence of events, to establish the facts of history and to explain them, but rather as a poet (*kavi*) to entertain and to instruct .... It is also a fact that the Indians cannot write history without beginning at the beginning. In order to write the history of the dynasty of their own time, the authors of the *Purāṇas* begin with the beginning of the world ... Hence comes the mixture of saga with history, greater as the author goes further back, less as he approaches his own time. Therefore it is quite

possible that an historian who can tell nothing but myths and fables for the earliest time may be quite reliable for his own time and the period immediately preceding."

This description might fairly be used for the Old Irish genealogical poems, the historical poems of the Middle Irish period, and some of the later bardic poetry.

Sylvain Lévi wrote of Vendryes's account of the Irish and Welsh court poets that it was 'almost a chapter of the history of India under another name. The similarity of these two feudal societies is really astonishing. Chance? That means nothing. Are they parallel developments of ancient common institutions?'<sup>2</sup> We can now say that they are.

From the evidence of Vedic sources, from the Homeric terms *aphthiton kléos*, *kléa andrōn*, and the research of Theodor Bergk, Adalbert Kuhn and their successors, and from Irish sources too, it is clear that songs in praise of heroes and their ancestors were an old Indo-European tradition.<sup>3</sup> I think it probable, if not certain, that in India and in Ireland that tradition lasted unbroken into modern times, and that in India the poems of *bhāṭs* and *chāraṇs* still to be heard in Rajasthan and the Panjab are a survival of the ancient custom.

<sup>1</sup> GIL III 82.33-34 (1933) 77.

<sup>2</sup> RC 50 (1933) 77.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Schmidt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1967), pp. 1-60.



## (ii) Heroic Narrative

The oldest Indo-European narrative form was a prose tale, with occasional passages of verse, the verse being used for dialogue to mark any heightening of emotion. This was first pointed out by Windisch, who was a specialist in both Sanskrit and Celtic. In a lecture delivered at Leipzig and published in 1879,<sup>1</sup> he drew attention to the resemblance in form between the Buddhist Jātakas and the Irish sagas, and formed the conclusion that both derived from a common Indo-European tradition. This opinion was declared again in the introduction to his edition of *Táin Bó Cualnge* (1903), p. xlviii, and in the *Geschichte der Sanskritphilologie* (1910), p. 404. Meanwhile Oldenberg proposed that many of the dialogue-hymns in the Rigveda were to be explained as the canonical part of a story (*ākhyāna*), of which the prose part was not fixed but left to the creative memory of the storyteller.<sup>2</sup> Windisch had proposed this for the hymn of Purūravas and Ūrvaśī (X 95), and Oldenberg arrived independently at the same conclusion. He later sought to show for several of the hymns that they could best be explained by supplying a narrative frame in which the verse dialogue could be set. His argument was strengthened by the evidence of the Buddhist Jātakas in which the prose-and-verse form is actually preserved, and where it is possible to show

<sup>1</sup> *Über die altirische Saga der Táin Bó Cualnge*, Verhandlungen der Philologenversammlung zu Gera (Leipzig 1879), pp. 15-32=RC 5 (1881-83) 70 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Das altindische Ākhyāna*, ZDMG 37 (1883), pp. 54-86; *Ākhyāna-Hymnen im Rigveda*, ib. 39 (1885), pp. 52-90=KL. Schr. I 404 ff.; 474 ff.; *Geschichte der altindischen Prosa* (Göttingen, 1917), see Appendix 1.

that the prose is later than the verse. This means, for the Jātakas at least, that the verse was memorised and handed down in a form fixed by its metre, while the prose was left to the art of the storyteller.

Oldenberg's theory has not won universal acceptance as regards the Rigveda, perhaps partly because the Irish and Welsh evidence is so little known. After a long interval the discussion was recently renewed by Alsdorf, who has strongly supported Oldenberg, and pointed to the weakness of the arguments of his opponents.<sup>1</sup> It may be said that Geldner, who was one of them, did not reject Oldenberg's notion altogether, but preferred in most instances to explain the dialogue-hymns as ballads. He did insist, however, that the hymn of Purūravas and Ūrvaśī (X 95) was a ballad, a single, closely constructed poem ('ein einheitliches festgefügtes Kunststück'), and plainly thought nothing here of the Ākhyāna theory. Yet he admits that 'the ballad assumes the existence, in all its essential features, of the tale as it is told in the old simple style of the folktale, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 11, 5, 1'.<sup>2</sup> There is even uncertainty in one passage as to who the speakers of the verses are. The hymn is certainly unintelligible as it stands, without the prose tale to explain it.

Purūravas was a mortal and Ūrvaśī was a nymph and they were lovers. Ūrvaśī laid an injunction upon Purūravas never to appear naked before her. Her supernatural companions, the Gandharvas, longed to have her back again, so they contrived a ruse which caused

<sup>1</sup> 'The Ākhyāna Theory Reconsidered', J. Or. Inst. Baroda 13 (1963-64), pp. 195 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Rigveda* III 298.



Purūravas to violate the injunction. A ewe with her two lambs was tied to Ūrvaśī's bed, and one night the Gandharvas carried off one of the lambs. She cried out that her pet lamb was being stolen, as though she had no protector. Then they took the second, and she cried out again. Purūravas sprang naked from the bed in pursuit of the thieves, and did not stay to put on his garment. The Gandharvas caused a flash of lightening, so that Ūrvaśī beheld him as though by daylight, and then she vanished. Later he found her with other nymphs, all in the form of swans, swimming in a lake.<sup>1</sup> She revealed herself to him, and he was allowed to become a Gandharva and was reunited with her in heaven.

In the Rigveda the hymn is a dialogue in which the speakers are Purūravas and Ūrvaśī, and there are eighteen stanzas. The hymn ends with a despairing plea by Purūravas (and presumably the disappearance of Ūrvaśī), and a prophetic stanza promising him future happiness in heaven. The whole tale is told in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (v. sup.), and four stanzas of the hymn are there given in their context as dialogue. Then the text says: 'This discourse in fifteen verses has been handed down by the 'Bahvr̥cas', perhaps implying that when the story was recited, the rest of the dialogue was to be brought in. But the story is continued with a promise by Ūrvaśī to meet Purūravas again after a year. They meet again, and she gives him his son. Later, by sacrificing with special fire, he becomes a Gandharva and is reunited with her in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> This motif recalls the episode in *Aislinge Oenguso* when Oengus goes to the lake and finds Caer Iborméith in the form of a swan, CR 145.

Finally in the Harivamśa 26, 1363<sup>1</sup> the whole story is told in epic verse. This is the fully developed epic form, as we find it in Homer and in *Beowulf*.

This example is of special interest on account of its completeness, and the light that it throws upon the origins of the Greek epic, now so much discussed.<sup>2</sup> Ever since Milman Parry made known his researches into oral epic tradition in the Balkans, it has become more and more clear that epic poetry, as we know it, derives from an unwritten tradition preserved by the creative memory of professional storytellers. The Indian examples show the earliest form of narrative, in which only the verse dialogue is fixed and, as it were, canonical, and the story is left to the memory of the narrator; and we see three successive forms of manuscript record, reflecting stages in the development.

It would take me too far to consider the several hymns for which Oldenberg claimed *ākhyāna*-form, as the hymns of the Rigveda are not an essential part of the evidence. In Oldenberg's major study of the question (Appendix I) he begins with the Jātakas, where the prose-and-verse form is dominant; and here there seems now to be general agreement. I will refer only to two recent witnesses, both of whom persist in rejecting Oldenberg's theory as applied to the Rigveda.

Thieme has examined the dialogue of Agastya and Lopāmudrā (I 179) and that of Saramā and the Paṇis (X 108), both of which conclude with stanzas which are best explained

<sup>1</sup> Calcutta ed. IV 491.

<sup>2</sup> A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1960); G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1962); N. K. Chadwick and V. Zhirmunsky, *Oral Epics of Central Asia* (Cambridge, 1969); G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry* (London, 1969).



as spells intended to avert misfortunes of one sort or another. He regards the hymns as charms, 'legend-spells', and declares that there is no need to invoke Oldenberg's theory.<sup>1</sup> He is applying to these two hymns the criticism which Lüders applied to the dialogue of Viśvāmitra and the Rivers (III 33), explaining the last stanza as a charm to secure the safe crossing of a river.<sup>2</sup> But Lüders says that this last stanza is a later addition, made so that the hymn could be used as a charm (p. 19), though he later seems to regard it as part of the original hymn (p. 550). In the two hymns discussed by Thieme, the concluding stanzas seem also to be spells composed later in order to give the hymns a particular application. Lüders makes the point that the presence of these hymns in the Rigveda may be on account of their magic power as Truth (*ṛta*), and Alsdorf suggests that the dialogue-verses of an *ākhyāna* with the addition of an appropriate spell may have been put to magical use, and so incorporated into the collection (*loc. cit.* p. 207). We shall see that this is just what has happened in one of the Irish examples that I shall have to present. The use of the hymns as charms does not conflict with the theory that they are in origin the dialogue part of a story.

The latest witness is Paul Horsch, who replies to Alsdorf's intervention in support of Oldenberg, with a reasoned refutation, or attempted refutation, of the *ākhyāna* theory as applied to the dialogue-hymns of the Rigveda. He argues that the *gāthās* in prose Jātakas are the kernel of a prose tale which is presumed to be familiar. The Vedic hymns suffice in themselves for a tradition-bound milieu,

<sup>1</sup> ZDMG 113 (1964) 69 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Varuṇa* pp. 19, 550.

and no prose is required. Secondly, if there had been a prose tale, even without fixed form, the actual traditions would have been better preserved in the Brāhmaṇas than they are. It is plain that the authors of the extant *ākhyāna* knew nothing about the original myth of Śunaḥśepa, and in other instances the original myth can be better reconstructed now from fragments of verse than was done by the authors of the Brāhmaṇas. Finally the dialogue-hymns were included in the collection because of their value as magic. Any prose element would have disturbed this magic quality.<sup>1</sup>

The first point is arbitrary. The hymn of Purūravas and Urvaśī cannot be understood without the prose. The second is more substantial, but it raises the question of the nature of oral prose tradition, which is only now being investigated.<sup>2</sup> How closely do individual versions of a folk-tale agree, and how quickly do they change? Unfortunately we have very little scope for diachronic study.<sup>3</sup> The third point is also persuasive, but even if the dialogues were commonly recited in a prose setting, the verses could have been received into the canon for their value as magic, just as the *Marainn Phádraig* has survived in Ireland as a charm against sickness.<sup>4</sup>

There is, indeed no absolute proof that the *ākhyāna*-theory is true of the dialogue-hymns in the Rigveda, but there seems to be general agreement now that it is true for

<sup>1</sup> Horsch 343-46.

<sup>2</sup> See the introduction to my *There was a King in Ireland* (Texas 1971). But the prose of the Jātakas often conflicts with the verse, showing that Horsch's objection is not valid. Oral tradition sometimes broke away from its source.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* p. 95. Alsdorf says that this may explain the presence of some at least of the hymns, *loc. cit.* 207.



the Jātakas. The verdict of Lüders in one of his last works is worth quoting in this connection: 'Since the tales are arranged by the number of *gāthās* they contain, since they are cited by the initial line of the first *gāthā*, since the prose in very many instances does not agree with the verse, and finally, since the extant prose narrative describes itself as a commentary on the Jātaka (*jātakass' atthavaṇṇanā*), I do not understand how anyone can doubt that the original collection consisted only of the verse'.<sup>1</sup>

The Buddhist prose Jātakas represent the earliest Indo-European narrative form, and this form is also found in the Brāhmaṇas.

There are several passages in the Brāhmaṇas in which the prose-and-verse form appears. In ŚB XI 5, 5, the Asuras cast darkness before the gods in order to prevent them from passing upwards to heaven. The gods, in their effort to dispel the darkness, approach Prajāpati for advice and speak in verse, and he replies in verse. The narrative is in prose. A famous example is the story of Sunahṣepa in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VII 13-18).<sup>2</sup> This tale was recited at the king's consecration after the anointing,<sup>3</sup> and it bears all the marks of folk tradition. Oldenberg says that it marks the oldest form of Indian narrative, a distant forerunner of the rich and delicate art of a later age (*op. cit.* 61).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Lüders, *Bharhut und die buddhistische Litteratur* (Kraus Reprint, Nendeln, 1966), p. 139. Cowell had given this opinion long ago, see E. B. Cowell, *The Jātaka* I pp. 9 ff.

<sup>2</sup> ed. Aufrecht, p. 195; trsl. Keith, HOS 25, p. 299; cf. H. Oldenberg, ZDMG 37, 79; Horsch, pp. 284-295.

<sup>3</sup> See Horsch, p. 284 ff; Heesterman, *Ancient Indian Royal Consecrations*, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I.

*Hariścandra Vaidhasa Aikṣvāka* was a king's son. He had a hundred wives but had himself no son, and he made a promise to the god Varuṇa that if a son was born to him he would sacrifice the child to Varuṇa. The god heard his prayer and a son was born to him. After the birth of the child, he obtained various delays in the fulfilment of his vow; and later the boy, Rohita, escaped into the forest. His father was stricken with disease in punishment, and Rohita resolved to return for the sacrifice. Five times he sought to return, and each time Indra intervened and told him to wander again in the forest. At last he bought for a hundred cows a brahmin's son named Sunahṣepa, whose father consented to slay him as a substitute victim. At the moment of sacrifice Sunahṣepa invoked the gods and was spared. Hariścandra was healed of his sickness, and Rohita was adopted by the hotṛ Viśvāmitra. Here too the dialogue is in verse. The story is called an *ākhyāna*,<sup>1</sup> and it appears in epic form both in the Mahābhārata (13, 186) and in the Rāmāyaṇa (1, 61, 19 ff.).

My friend Dr. Nilmadhav Sen tells me that the *Kṛṣṇa-līlā-kīrtana* is still commonly sung in the villages of Bengal. The songs are sung by several voices, and are linked *Mūl-Gāyana* i.e. the principal Singer or narrator. I have myself witnessed in Jaipur a similar performance by professional *chārāṇs*, who were praising the heroic ancestors of the dynasty of Jodhpur. The events were first recited in prose, and then sung to the accompaniment of a violin-like instrument called *Ravan Hatha*. The *ākhyāna*-form may thus be said to survive in Bengal and in Rajasthan to the present

<sup>1</sup> Ait. B. VII 18.



day. Indian readers may know of a much wider measure of survival.

Oldenberg traced this narrative form from the Brāhmaṇas through the Mahābhārata, the Mahāvagga and the Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta, and the Jātakas, and concluded that we possess in the Pali 'texts' a clear and certain example of a narrative tradition which preserves only the verse and leaves the formulation of the prose to the narrator.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative form preserved in the Brāhmaṇas and Jātakas is the common saga-form in Ireland. The Irish sagas are prose tales with occasional passages of verse, the verse being used for direct speech. In *The Adventure of Conla* the fairy maiden who invites Conla to The Land of the Living speaks in verse. The most famous of the tales of the Celtic Otherworld is *The Voyage of Bran* which contains two long poems, making more than half the text, the invitation to Bran, and the welcome of the god Manannán. The grandest of all the sagas is *The Death of the Sons of Uisnech*, the story of the Doomed Lovers, which is believed to be the earliest form of the romance of Tristan and Isolde. Here when the druid foretells the birth of Deirdre he speaks in verse, and when her lover and his two brothers are slain at the end of the story, Deirdre's lament and her speech in defiance of the king are also in verse. In some of the sagas, many of the verse passages that survive are in a very archaic metre, stanzas with a varying number of syllables in the line, and with alliteration but no rhyme, and the language of these passages is obscure and is for the most part still untranslated. We may suppose that in the period of oral tradition to which this heroic literature belongs, the

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1.

verse passages of direct speech were fixed as canonical and memorised, and the narrative was left to the creative memory of the reciter. Then when the tales came to be written down, in the ninth century and later, the archaic verse texts at first remained unchanged, and were then, as time went on, re-composed in the 'new metres'.<sup>1</sup> This may prove to be a criterion by which recensions of the Irish sagas could be dated. The state of the Irish saga is then the state of the Vedic Brāhmaṇas, which date perhaps from the sixth century B.C. at latest.

In Welsh literature we have a welcome confirmation of this theory. In the Red Book of Hergest there are sixty-nine *englynion* (the *englyn* is a stanza of three lines) attributed to the bard Llywarch Hen, which Sir Ivor Williams explained as being all that was left of a lost cycle of sagas.<sup>2</sup> The verse passages which remain correspond to the *śamvāda*-hymns of the Rīgveda, and the *gāthās* of the Jātakas. The prose narrative in an oral tradition was left to the *cyfarwydd* (story-teller) and was not written down, but the verse was a canonical text and was committed to the safety of writing. In Wales, as in Ireland, the ancient Indo-European prose-and-verse form persisted into historic times.

In addition to the narrative form, there are specific motifs which support the theory that in India and in Ireland a common tradition has survived. The appearance of common motifs in Indian and Irish stories is in itself a part of folklore, and would not call for any special explanation. But given the other evidence we have seen, the number of

<sup>1</sup> See CR 231.

<sup>2</sup> I. Williams, 'The Poems of Llywarch Hen', PBA 18 (1932); *Lectures on early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1944), pp. 22 ff.; 35 ff.



motifs that appear in both traditions can hardly be dismissed as mere accidents. The opinion of professional folklorists in the matter will be welcome.

The legend of *Ónaḥsépa* (p. 72) contains the motif of a substitute victim for human sacrifice, the theme indeed of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. There is an Irish saga, *The Adventure of Art son of Conn* *o* in which the same motif occurs. The manuscript tradition is late, for the only surviving text is in the Book of Fermoy (15th cent.). But it will hardly be doubted that the story is old. The traditional date of Art son of Conn is the third century A.D., but he is a legendary figure.

Eithne of the Long Side, daughter of Brisleinn Binn, king of Lochlann, was the wife of Conn of the Hundred Battles. She died and was buried at Tailtiu. Tailtiu and Bruig na Bóinne and Cruachain were the three chief burial-places of Ireland. Conn was desolate. He went out alone from Tara one day and came to Benn Étair meic Étgaith. On the same day it happened that the Tuatha Dé Danann were met in council to judge a woman taken in sin. Bé Cuma of the Fair Skin, daughter of Éogan Inbir, the wife of Labraid Swift-Hand-at-Sword, had sinned with Gaidiar son of Manannán. Their counsel was to banish her from the Land of Promise. A message was sent to Oengus of the Burig by Labraid, whose daughter Nuamaisi was Oengus's wife, that Bé Cuma should be refused hospitality in all the fairy mounds of Ireland. She was sent into Ireland because the Tuatha De Danann hated the Irish for driving them out.

Bé Cuma loved Art son of Conn, although she did not

<sup>1</sup> Ed. R. I. Best, *Eriu* 3 (1907) 149 ff.

know him except by report. She set out over the sea in a coracle and came to land at Benn Étair. (Her beauty is described in conventional style. But a banished woman is no mate for the High King of Ireland.) She met Conn and falsely told him that she was Delbchaem, daughter of Morgán, and that she had come in quest of Art. They joined friendship, and she bound him to obey her. She required that Art be banished from Tara for a year.<sup>1</sup> They arrived in Tara as man and wife, and Conn banished Art from Tara and from Ireland. For a year there was neither corn nor milk in Ireland. The druids declared that Conn's wife had brought this curse on the country by her wickedness and her unbelief, and that it could be removed only by the sacrifice of the son of a sinless couple, and the mixing of his blood with the soil of Tara.<sup>1</sup>

Conn set out in quest of the sinless boy, leaving the kingdom to Art during his absence. He went to Benn Étair and found there the coracle which Bé Cuma had left hidden. For a month and a fortnight it carried him over the sea from one island to another. Monsters of the sea surrounded the boat. At last he came to a strange island and put in to shore. (The description of the island is according to type—fragrant apple-trees, wells of wine surrounded by hazel-trees, a house thatched with bird's feathers, with doorposts of bronze and doors of crystal). Within he found the queen Rigrú of the Large Eyes, daughter of Lodan from the Land of Promise, and wife of Dáire the Wonderful,

<sup>1</sup> There is a discrepancy here. Having given her love to Conn, she appears to have turned against Art.

A similar story is told by Nennius about the British prince Gortigern. *Historia Britonum* §§ 40-42.



son of Fergus of the Noble Judgement from the Land of Wonders. Her son, Ségda Saerlabraid sat in a chair of crystal. Conn sat down, and his feet were washed by invisible hands. Soon a flame leaped from the hearth, and a hand guided him towards the fire. Tables laden with food appeared before him, but none had brought them. A drinking-horn appeared, and the dishes were borne away. Then he saw a tub of blue glass with hoops of gold, and Dáire bade him bathe in the tub. He slept and awoke refreshed, and food was again set before him. This time he declared it was a *geis* for him to eat alone. His hosts were bound to eat alone, but Ségda consented to eat with him. Those two lay in the same bed that night.

Next day Conn declared his quest and asked that Ségda be given up to him for the sacrifice. Dáire would not surrender him. His only intercourse with his wife had been at the conception of Ségda, and both he and his wife were conceived in the same way, their parents having had only one intercourse. But the boy protested that the King of Ireland should not be refused, and insisted on going. His people placed him under the protection of the kings of Ireland, and of Art son of Conn, and Finn son of Cumall, and of the poets, so that he might return safely. Conn agreed to that, if it were possible. He returned to Tara and the druids insisted on the boy's death. As they were about to kill him, a woman entered the assembly, driving a cow. She sat between Conn and Finn. Then she bade the druids slaughter the cow, mix the blood with the soil of Tara and smear it on the doorposts, and spare the boy. There were two bags on the cow's sides, a bird with one leg in one of them, a bird with twelve legs in the other. She told them to cut open the bags when the cow had been slaughtered,

and release the birds. The birds fought, and the one-legged bird prevailed. The woman told them that they were the bird with twelve legs, and Ségda the bird with one leg, for he was in the Truth. She then bade Conn put away the sinful woman, but he could not do that. She foretold that their state would grow still worse, and then she departed with her son Ségda.

The rest of the story does not concern us, but it is perhaps not too far-fetched to regard the motif of the human victim to be slain in expiation of the king's fault as a survival of ancient Indo-European tradition. Dumézil in his *Flamen-Brahman* has examined the legend of Śunaḥśepa and finds in it the original myth of the priest-victim, but Horsch points out that in India the priest could not be sacrificed, and that it is Śunshśepa, the king's son, not the king himself, for whom a substitute victim is found (*op. cit.*, p. 291).

The famous story of Śakuntalā also has an analogue in Ireland. Śakuntalā was the foster-child of the hermit Kaṇva, and was discovered in the forest by King Duṣyanta and became his wife. Of them was born Bharata, ancestor of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, whose enmity is the central theme of the Mahābhārata. The story of Śakuntalā is told in the Mahābhārata itself, and it is the subject of Kālidāsa's most famous play. The legendary Irish King, Cormac mac Airt, has an adventure like that of Duṣyanta. In the Book of Leinster (12th cent.) and other early manuscripts there is a saga called *The Music of Buchet's House* in which the theme and setting are much like those of the Indian story. Buchet has retired into the forest with his foster-child Eithne, and Cormac finds her by chance and makes her his queen.

The Indian legend of Paraśurāma tells how the god of



the Ocean granted him as territory as much of the sea as he could encompass by a throw of his axe. Paraśurāma stood upon a promontory and hurled his axe southwards to the next promontory, and the ocean receded from the space within the axe-throw, yielding the Malabar coast as Paraśurāma's kingdom. There is an Irish story, known only from a brief reference in the *Dindshenchas*,<sup>2</sup> about one Tuirbe Trágmair, who threw his axe against the flowing tide, and the tide was stayed and could advance no further.

There is one other curious image in the Hindu tradition which recurs in Irish mythology, and the agreement might be fortuitous, but it is so marked and so peculiar that it is worth mentioning. According to the philosophy of Sāṅkhya, the physical and spiritual elements in nature are known as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* respectively: *prakṛti* is said to be unintelligent energy, as though blind, and *puruṣa* is inert but conscious, as though crippled.<sup>3</sup> By their union they can accomplish their mission of creation, just as a lame man who can see may reach his destination by mounting on the back of a blind man who can walk. The image belongs to the doctrine of *Nyāya* (Logic) and is known as *andha-khāṇja-nyāya* or 'the Analogy of the Blind Man and the Lame Man'.<sup>4</sup>

The Irish mythological tale, *the Adventure of Nerae*,<sup>5</sup> begins with the motif of the thirsty corpse,<sup>6</sup> which indeed re-

<sup>1</sup> ed. Stokes, RC 25 (1904), 18 ff.

<sup>2</sup> ed. Stokes, *The Academy* 44 (1893) 439; cf. metr. Dinds. IV 226.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, *Religion of the Hindus* 85.

<sup>4</sup> I owe this information to my friend Sudhibhushan Bhattacharya.

<sup>5</sup> ed. Stokes, RC 10 (1889), 212 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See S. O. Duilearga, in J. Ryan (ed.), *Féilsyubhinn Edin Mhic Néill* (Dublin, 1940) 522 ff.

calls the similar motif in the Sanskrit *Vetāla-pāñca-vimśats*. Nerae there joins a procession of fairies and descends with them into the Otherworld by way of the cave of Croghan. (The Irish Otherworld is imagined sometimes as under the earth, and sometimes as in islands beyond the sea). He is kindly received, and the king finds him a home and a wife. His daily task is to supply the king with firewood. One morning he sees a blind man with a lame man on his back going to the well. The blind man asks 'Is it there,' and the lame man replies 'It is'. And Nerae's wife explains that the blind man is the guardian of the king's diadem which is kept in the well, and that he needs the lame man, who can see, to help him in that duty. This episode is unmotivated and is not referred to again in the story. It must be a commonplace of oral tradition which has drifted into the recension of the text, as it were by chance. But the form is so like the Indian form that one can hardly doubt their having a common origin.<sup>1</sup> The image has had a notable renewal in modern Irish literature. Lady Gregory told the Irish story in her *Cuchullinn of Murtheimne*, and Yeats must have seen it there. He transformed the lame man into a fool, and in the play 'On Baile's Strand', the theme of which is the death of Cú Chulainn, the Fool and the Blind Man make the tension of opposites. They come again in 'The Cat and The Moon', and in 'The Death of Cuchulain', and in one of his last poems Yeats remembers them:

'And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread,  
Cuchulain fought the ungovernable sea;

<sup>1</sup> 'We could doubt every single one of these facts, but we cannot doubt them all', L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford, 1969) § 232.



Heart-mysteries there, and yet when all is said  
It was the dream itself enchanted me.'

In the great epic of India, the Mahābhārata, when Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers are wandering in exile in the forest, the holy sage Bhṛhadaśva consoles them by reciting the story of Nala and Damayantī, who suffered like hardships and overcame them. The story has features which closely resemble episodes in Irish sagas. Nala was a brave and handsome king and Damayantī was a beautiful princess. They had not met, but were in love without having seen each other (*adr̥ṣṭa-kāma*). One day Nala caught a swan, and it promised, if he set it free, to go to Damayantī and praise him to her so that she would love no other than him. Damayantī received the message, and bade the swan return to Nala and speak to him of her in the same way. The King, Damayantī's father, seeing that his daughter was in love, decided to hold a *svayamvara* ('choosing for oneself') at which she could declare her choice, and the feast was announced far and wide. Even the gods heard the news, and Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Yama decided to appear as suitors. On their way down from heaven, they saw Nala making his way to the palace, and decided to send him to speak for them. The unhappy king dared not disobey the gods. He went to the palace and announced that the four gods were suitors for the hand of Damayantī, but she was steadfast and replied that she loved only Nala. He returned to the gods and gave them her answer. The gods devised a plan in order to outwit Damayantī. On the day of the feast they all put on the likeness of Nala, so that she was confronted with five Nalas, and could not choose from among them. She resorted to an *Act of Truth*. She made four true statements: that upon hearing the swan's message, she

had chosen Nala; that she sinned neither in thought nor in word; that the gods themselves had appointed Nala to be her husband; and that she had made a vow of love in order to win Nala. Each time she added: 'By this truth may the Gods make him known to me!' The four gods were so moved by this that they put off their disguises. Their skin became free of sweat, their eyes ceased to blink, they were unstained by the dust of their fresh garlands, and their feet no longer touched the ground; and so Damayantī recognised Nala and chose him for her husband.

The rest of the story is of their many trials and final happiness. It is well known, and does not concern us.<sup>2</sup> But the first part contains three incidents which have striking parallels in Irish literature. The first is the love of the unseen one, which is a commonplace in Irish sagas and is called *grád écmaise* ('love in absence'). In *Táin Bó Fraich* Findabair loves Froech without having seen him, by reason of his fame. In the story about Conn of the Hundred Battles (p. 76), Bé Cuma was in love with Art, although she did not know him. In the *Tale of Cano son of Garthan*, both the daughter of Diarmait and Créd daughter of Guaire loved Cano before he ever came from Scotland. The motif is familiar to everyone who knows the Irish sagas.

The second incident is that of the five Nalas, which closely resembles an episode in one of the Irish mythological tales. In the *Wooing of Étain*,<sup>3</sup> Echaid Airem loses his wife to the fairy king Midir at a game of chess. The men

<sup>1</sup> Mahābhārata (Poona ed.) 3, 54 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> The Story of Nala is in vol. II pp. 177-167 of the Mahābhārata translated by P. C. Roy (Calcutta, Oriental Publishing Co. n.d.)

<sup>3</sup> ed. R. I. Best and O. Bergin, *Eriu* 12, 137 ff.



of Ireland attack the fairy mound of Bri Léith,<sup>1</sup> which was Midir's dwelling, and begin to dig it in search of Étaín, Midir under this threat offers to send her back to Tara. On the following day, when Echaid and his companions are expecting her, fifty girls appear, all in the form and raiment of Étaín, and the king has to choose as best he can. He is not as successful as Damayanti, but the story itself is outside our present interest. Indeed, the agreement here would not alone be convincing, but among so many other examples it carries weight.

The third example in the Nala story is the *Act of Truth*, which makes a fitting close to the argument for common survivals in the literature. In both Indian and Irish stories there are episodes in which a person is able to work a miracle by formal recitation of the truth. There is a second instance in the Nala story, when Damayanti, alone in the forest, is assailed by a wicked hunter. She saves herself by uttering the true statement that she longs only for Nala, and praying that by this truth the hunter may fall dead. He dies instantly.<sup>2</sup> The Sanskrit term for the Act of Truth is *Satya-kriyā*, and I need not illustrate it further from Indian narrative literature.<sup>3</sup> It occurs commonly (*sacca-kiriya*) in Buddhist stories too. I shall have to return to the belief in the power of Truth in its wider aspects later (p. 127). There are two Irish stories in which this belief is clearly shown. One is the story of *Cormac's Adventure in the Promised Land*,<sup>3</sup> and the other tells how he became king of Ireland, and is pre-

<sup>1</sup> It was identified by O'Donovan with a prehistoric mound near

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, 3, 60.38; transl. II ii 136.

Ardagh, Co. Longford, which has not yet been excavated.

<sup>3</sup> ed. Windisch, IT III 193 ff. transl. 211 ff.; EIL 110 ff.

sented later (p. 130) in illustration of the Prince's Truth. In the first, when Cormac is in the fairy palace, a pig is roasted by the telling of four truths over it, one for each quarter. A gold cup is brought, and when Cormac wonders at its beauty, the warrior says: 'There is something more wonderful about it, for if three lies are told over it, it breaks into three parts, and three truths make it whole again'. And so it is done. The warrior then reveals that he is Manannán mac Lir, and that he has brought Cormac to see the Land of Promise.

It will be seen that here as in the Indian stories, the belief is not merely that virtue will be rewarded if one tells the truth, but that Truth has magic power and can work wonders. One more Indian example may be given because it finds an echo in an Irish story. It is told of a certain King Sibi that when asked by a blind brahmin for one of his eyes, he gladly gave him both. Indra called on him to speak truths that his eyes might be restored, and the king declared that he had truly granted this request as he always granted the requests of petitioners. At once his eyes were restored.<sup>1</sup> Here admittedly the rewarding of virtue is present, but the magic power of Truth remains intact. The Irish story is about the poet Athirne who was famous for his greed and envy. One occasion he asked the king, Echaid, to give him his one eye, for Echaid had but one; and the king at once plucked out his eye and gave it into the poet's hand. God rewarded his generosity by returning both his eyes.<sup>2</sup> The Act of Truth does not appear in the Irish story as it has come down to us. But it is found elsewhere, as we have

<sup>1</sup> Jātaka 499. See Lüders, *Varuṇa* 486 ff.

<sup>2</sup> RC 8, 48.



seen, and this notion of the power of Truth is well established in Irish tradition.

An extension of the notion of the power of Truth is the *śravaṇa-phala* ('reward for hearing') bestowed upon those who listen reverently to a story. The story is true, and the mere listening to it brings a reward. At the end of a number of poems in the Mahābhārata, the reward for hearing or reciting the poem is declared: 'Those who recite the great adventure of Nala, and those who hear it attentively, misfortune shall not visit them. His affairs shall prosper and he shall attain wealth. Having heard this ancient story, whose excellence endures eternally, he shall have sons and grandsons, wealth in cattle and pre-eminence among men. He will be free from sickness and rich in love'.<sup>1</sup> Of the story of Sāvitrī it is said: 'He who has heard with devotion the glorious story of Sāvitrī, that man is fortunate, his affairs shall prosper, and never shall sorrow visit him'.<sup>2</sup> And elsewhere there is mention of a reward for hearing the recitation of the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṃśa or the legend of Śunaḥśepa.<sup>3</sup>

This notion appears also in Irish literature, and in a very similar form. One of the 'wonders' of the great heroic saga, *The Cattle Raid of Cooley*, is that he who hears it recited will enjoy protection for a year.<sup>4</sup> There is a mytho-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, 3, 78. 12-13; P. C. Roy transl. II ii 170.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* (Calcutta ed.) 16917; P. C. Roy, *Mahābhārata* III, 638.; The Poona edition prints the *phala-śruti* as add. 1333, see vol. III p. 989; Winternitz, HIL I 399.

<sup>3</sup> HIL I 399.

<sup>4</sup> K. Meyer *Triads of Ireland* 62.

logical tale, *Altram Tige Dá Medar* ('The Nurture of the Houses of the Two Pails'), which is of interest on account of the distinction that is made between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the gods who dwell in the Land of Promise beyond the sea, and here the reward for hearing the story is stated.

After the Tuatha Dé Danann had been defeated by the Milesians, who came to Ireland from Spain according to legendary history, Manannán came to advise them, and he bade them scatter themselves in the fairy mounds and in the hills and plains of Ireland. He instituted the *féth fiada*, a magic power by which they could make themselves invisible, and he told them to plan their dwellings like the dwellings in Emain Ablach, his own kingdom.

He then spoke with Oengus, son of the Dagda, when they were alone together, and told him that he, Manannán, was king over all the kings of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and that Elcmar was not to occupy Bruig na Bóinne any longer, and that Oengus, who was his foster-son, should expel him from it; and he taught him a spell for that purpose.

After Elcmar had been expelled, Oengus gave a feast for Manannán and for the Tuatha Dé Danann, and he invited them all to send him a child in fosterage. Manannán returned home, and his wife bore him a daughter, Curcóg. She and the other girls born at that time to the gods were sent in fosterage to Oengus. Among them was one Eithne, who excelled them all in beauty and virtue.

Finnbarr came to visit the girls and stared at Eithne, asking who she was, with insulting words. Eithne blushed and went away in tears, and from that moment she would touch neither food nor drink. For seven days she fasted until Oengus offered her the milk of his dun cow, and the



use of a fine gold milk-pail. She accepted on condition that she might milk the cow herself. It was one of two marvellous cows which Manannán and Oengus had brought from India with their gold vessels and silk spangles. They were in milk throughout the year, and their milk had the taste of honey and the intoxication of wine. Manannán possessed the other, the brindled cow, and there were none like to them.

The news of Eithne reached Manannán in Emain Ablach, and he summoned her so that he might learn the cause of her sickness, for he knew every sickness and its cure. She would not touch food in his house, but only the milk of the brindled cow, which she milked herself. He declared that she was no longer of the Tuathe Dé Danann, for when Finnbarr spoke to her, her guardian demon left her and an angel took his place. She could take the milk because it came from a righteous land, namely India; and all men would speak of this nourishment, the Nurture of the Houses of the Two Milk-Pails. The Trinity of Three Persons would be her God.

From the time of Érimón until the time of Loegaire, when Patrick came to Ireland, Eithne lived on the wonderful milk, with Oengus at the Bruig or with Manannán at Emain Ablach. (These are the Houses of the Two Pails).

Once in the heat of the day the girls of the Bruig went to bathe in the Boyne. When they went out of the river to dress, Eithne did not see them go, for the *féth fiada* had departed from her. They had become invisible to her, and she was visible to men. She came out of the water and dressed, and went in search of the others, only to find a cleric at the door of his church, praising the Lord. Finally

St. Patrick arrived and baptised her. A fortnight later she died and went to heaven.

St. Patrick ordered that no one should sleep or interrupt while this story was being told, and he endowed it with many virtues, which are recited in the elegy that follows. Here it is said that many rewards are in store for those who recite it or hear it recited, children, safety on a voyage at sea, success in legal disputes and in hunting, peace in the banqueting hall. If prisoners hear the story, it will be as though their bonds were loosed.<sup>1</sup> And strangely enough, the passage recounting these blessings has been preserved orally, in varying degrees of corruption, with the title 'Patrick's Lament' throughout the Irish speaking districts as a charm against sickness. Several versions of it have been collected and published in *Béaloideas*, the Journal of the Irish Folklore Society.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, and as a proof that this reward for hearing a sacred text was a familiar theme in Ireland, *The Vision of Mac Con Glinne* may be cited in evidence. This is a late medieval satire on monastic life in the form of a parody on Voyage Tales such as *The Voyage of Bran*. The squalor and inhospitality of the monasteries, and the arrogance of the monks are held up to ridicule. They condemn Mac Con Glinne to death by crucifixion for complaining of their food, and even the idea of crucifixion is made an occasion for burlesque. The condemned man ridicules his tormentors and puts them to shame. He then cures the king of a

<sup>1</sup> *Eriu* 11 (1932), 224.

<sup>2</sup> 'Mairbhne Eithne no Mairbhne Phadraig', *Béaloideas* 4 (1934), 264; R. Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum* II 136 § 12.



very serious sickness and is richly rewarded. The story ends in a climax of satire with an irreverent parody of this theme: 'There are thirty chief virtues attached to this tale, and a few of them are enough for an example. The married couple to whom it is told on their first night shall not separate without begetting an heir. They shall not be in dearth of food or clothing. If it is the first tale told in a new house, no corpse shall ever be carried out of it; it shall not want for food or clothing; fire shall not burn it. A king to whom the tale is recited before battle or conflict shall be victorious. On the occasion of bringing out ale, or of feasting a prince or of taking inheritance or patrimony, this tale should be recited'.<sup>1</sup>

The *Ākhyāna*-form of Brāhmaṇas and Jātakas, a prose narrative with dialogue in verse, is the characteristic form of Irish saga, and we have seen that there is evidence in Welsh which shows that the same form was used in Wales. Besides the form, so many images and ideas appear as common to the two traditions that we are led to attribute them to a common source. That common source can only be an original Indo-European narrative tradition. Just as it has been shown that Vedic, Greek, Slavonic and Celtic share a common tradition of heroic poetry, both as regards metrical form and the ideas that inspired it, so we can say that Windisch and Oldenberg were right in claiming to recognise in the prose-and-verse tales of India and Ireland an ancient Indo-European heritage.

<sup>1</sup> K. Meyer, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* 110-12.

## SOCIETY, KINGSHIP, AND CUSTOMARY LAW

In India and in Ireland the normal family-group for the purpose of inheritance and of certain obligations extended to four generations, that is to say descendants as far as the degree of great-grandson. The *sapinda*-kindred in India, those who were allowed to share in the ritual offerings to the dead, included the three ascending and the three descending generations, a person being always in the last generation of an expiring family-group and the first generation of a new one.<sup>1</sup> In Ireland this four-generation family was called *derbfine* 'true kindred', as distinct from other groups *gelfine*, *ierfine*, *indfine* recognised in the law-tracts.<sup>2</sup> There is nothing of special interest there, beyond the survival east and west of ancient custom, since traces of this system are to be found elsewhere among Indo-European peoples.<sup>3</sup>

The most remarkable comment on Celtic social organisation, and specially significant for our purpose, comes from Julius Caesar in his division of Gaulish society into three classes (p. 24) which correspond exactly to the three upper

<sup>1</sup> J. Jolly, *Recht und Sitte*, pp. 77. 85; Manu IX 137. 186.

<sup>2</sup> D. Binchy, *Irish Law Tracts* 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.



castes of Vedic India. Here too we are in the presence of ancient Indo-European tradition, as has been shown in many instances by G. Dumézil. On the mythological level he has shown that the Roman gods Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus are the patrons of the three 'functions' represented in India by brahmin, kshatriya and vaiśya respectively, and in Gaul by druids, equites and plebs. And he has traced this tripartite division of functions in the literature of the Germans, and the Iranians as well.<sup>1</sup>

In Ireland we can recognise as three corresponding classes the *fili*, the *flaith* and the *aithech*. The *fili* was originally a seer and diviner, heir to some of the functions of the pagan druid (*druí*). From early times the *fili* were an organised professional class of poets, admission to which was earned by twelve years of study, according to the texts. They were divided into seven grades: *ollam* (lit. 'highest'), *ánsruth*, *cli*, *canae*, *dos*, *mac fuirmid*, *fochluc*, and the whole class constituted one of the noble ranks. 'Three upper ranks of privilege', says an old text, 'bishop, nobleman, poet'.<sup>2</sup> (The word *nemed*, here rendered as 'privilege' is cognate with Sanskrit *namas* 'reverence' and normally means 'sacred person, place or thing'.)

*Flaith* means 'nobleman', the Indian kshatriya, and *aithech* means 'rentpayer', a member of the class who cultivated the land, the Indian vaiśya. The Gaulish druid can fairly be equated to the brahmin; but in Ireland, with the coming of Christianity, the druids were forced to yield their

<sup>1</sup> G. Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus* (Paris, ); *Mythe et Épopée*, I, pp. 48 ff. (Paris, 1967); *Les aïeux des Germains* (Paris, 1959); *Naissance d'Archanges* (Paris, 1945).

<sup>2</sup> *Tri nemid uaisli ... espoc 7 flaith 7 file*, quoted RIA Dict. F 133.82.

priestly functions to Christian priests, and the old word *druí* came to be used for a magician. However, the *fili* inherited a great part of the rank and privilege of the druids, and were revered and feared by king and commoner.

The parallel division of society in India and among the Celts is very striking, and it seems that even in some details the two traditions may be found to agree, and to throw light upon each other. At many points in discussing the Indian bardic tradition (pp. 53 ff.), we encountered the opposition of religious to secular verse. The *dāna-stuti* was composed by the brahmin, the *nārāṣamsī* by the kshatriya, and correspondingly the *brahmarṣi* is opposed to the *rājarṣi*, the priest-poet to the warrior-poet. The Irish term *rigfili* is the equivalent of Sanskrit *rājarṣi*, and points to an old common distinction, but the Irish title has no special connotation in the texts, so far as I know. It is twice used of Amarguin in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.

There is also in Celtic the problem of the bard. The term *bárdos* occurs in Strabo and Diodorus, doubtless taken from Posidonius, and is opposed to *uates* and *druída* by Strabo, to *druída* only by Diodorus. The bard was the principal poet among the Gauls, so far as the praise of famous men was concerned, and corresponds to the Indian *sūta*. In Ireland later he is an inferior poet, less learned than the *fili* and allowed to use only certain common metres. The *fili*, as we have seen, is a sacred person and member of a highly organised profession. It seems that among the Celts, as among the Hindus, there was a dichotomy between sacred and secular learning.<sup>1</sup> In India the brahmins finally

<sup>1</sup> 'Apart from the priestly tradition, there was a tradition proper to warriors and laymen', La Vallée Poussin, *Indo-europeens et Indo-Iraniens* 234.



ousted the kshatriyas from the leadership which they enjoyed in the period of the Jātakas. In Gaul druids and bards flourished side by side, the druids caring for sacred learning, and the bards for the glory of their patrons. In Ireland the druids were pushed aside or absorbed into the new monasticism. (They had already been suppressed in Gaul and Britain by the Romans.) Those of them who were poets took over the office of the bards, and became custodians of genealogical lore and of history. The word for poet is *fili* and for poetry *filidecht*, and the *bard* is an inferior sort of poet<sup>1</sup>.

The struggle between brahmin and kshatriya, to which Horsch refers, belongs to a time separated by at least two thousand years from the period of Indo-European unity; and the evidence of Posidonius for Gaul belongs to a still later time (1st cent. B.C.). We cannot suggest more than an analogy between the two stories, and much on the Celtic side is hypothesis.

Over this tripartite society reigned a king, *rājā* in India, *rīx* in Gaul, (*ri*, gen. *rig* in Ireland), and the etymological identity is significant. It is shared only by Latin *rēx* 'king'. Greek *anax*<sup>2</sup> and *basileus*, Gothic *kunings*, Russian *korol*, have no affinity with it or with each other.

A good deal has been written about Indian kingship recently<sup>3</sup> and it is clear that the sacred character of the king was strongly felt and protected in ancient India. The litera-

<sup>1</sup> See G. Murphy, 'Bards Find filidh', *Eigse* 2(1940) 200. ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Pühvel, *KZ* 73 (1955-56), 202 ff.

<sup>3</sup> J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the religious point of view* (Leiden, 1966); J. C. Heesterman, *The ancient Indian royal consecration* (The Hague, 1957).

ture on the subject is enormous, and a study of it would go beyond the limits of our enquiry.<sup>1</sup> We shall confine ourselves to matters in which East and West seem to meet, and even so I shall often have to rely for India on secondary sources.

We know that there were kings in Gaul, although the era of kingship was passing in Caesar's time, and powerful tribes such as the Helvetii, the Aedui and the great tribe of Arverni, were governed by an aristocracy without a king. But Orgetorix sought to make himself king of the Helvetii, and Dumnorix of the Aedui had the same ambition.<sup>2</sup> Caesar says that that Vercingetorix was called 'king' (*rex*) by his own people the Arverni;<sup>3</sup> and he mentions Diviciacus and Galba as successive kings of the Suessiones.<sup>4</sup> In Britain and in Ireland, kingship survived into the Middle Ages and later, and it is mainly on British and Irish evidence that we must depend for evidence about Celtic kingship.<sup>5</sup>

Ray Chaudhuri's chapter on kingship is a good summary of what is known about kingship in India in the Vedic age. He admits that the picture is dim, but some points emerge that are of interest for our purpose.<sup>6</sup>

Five words for 'king' are used in a passage in the Aitareya Brahmana, one for each of the five regions, east,

<sup>1</sup> P. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra* I-271; R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age* 332 ff.; H. R. Ray Chaudhuri, *The Political History of Ancient India* C, (5th ed., 1950) 156 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* I 18.

<sup>3</sup> *ib.* vii 4a. The *-rix* in these names is itself evidence for kingship.

<sup>4</sup> *ib.* iv 7.

<sup>5</sup> See D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> H. C. Ray Chaudhuri, *The Political History of Ancient India* (5th ed. 1950).



south, west, north and centre. The words are: *samrāt*, *bhoja*, *svarāt*, *virāt* and *rājā*, respectively; but the arrangement by the regions is plainly artificial. *Rājā* is the ordinary word for 'king', and the *samrāt* is elsewhere distinguished as a superior king. These two terms are well established.

It may first be observed that society in Vedic India was tribal, and that kings are commonly presented as ruling over small communities.<sup>1</sup> The king was supposed to show himself to his subjects every morning. Gonda has examined the word *rāj-* and its root *\*reg-*, which he rightly explained as meaning 'to stretch'; and he suggests that the *rājā* was primarily the protector, who stretched out his arm to protect and rule his people.<sup>2</sup> He is often called *dirgha-bāhu* or *mahā-bāhu* 'long-armed' and he is also *danda-dhāra*, which Gonda translates 'administering justice'.<sup>3</sup> But this last epithet literally means 'bearing the rod', which would be better, as a white rod was an emblem of sovereignty used at the royal inauguration both in Ireland and in Greece, and Gonda himself points to the importance of the king's rod in India (*ib.* p. 22).

It is not known how the king was chosen. Descent was sometimes from father to son, but there is evidence of a process of election, either by the people (*parisad*, *samiti*),<sup>4</sup> or by a smaller group of electors; and there are instances in the Jātakas of persons outside the royal kindred being brought in. The king was consecrated with an elaborate ritual, and those who took part in it included his brother,

<sup>1</sup> Gonda, *Kingship*, 1 n. 1; 77; V. M. Apte in *The Vedic Age* ALT.

<sup>2</sup> KZ 73 (1956) 151 ff.; *Kingship*, 122. See also Celtic *Kingship* 3 f.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Rāja-taraṅginī* the parishadyas fast in order to force the assent to elect a new king (V 468).

the *sūta* (bard and charioteer), the headman of the village, and a common tribesman. Two forms of ritual may here be mentioned, the *rāja-sūya*, which renewed the vigour of the *rājā*, and the *vāja-peya*, which conferred the higher dignity of *samrāt*.<sup>5</sup> The first is described at length by Heesterman, who devotes a whole volume to it. The ceremonies lasted for two years, and only some features will be mentioned here. They are described in the fifth book of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

The central rite was the sprinkling (*abhiṣeka*) of the king with water made up of seventeen liquids, including water from the river Sarasvatī, sea-water, dew, water from a pond, a well and a whirlpool, milk, curds and ghee.<sup>6</sup> The king then walked towards each of the five regions in turn to symbolise the extent of his rule. The story of Śunaḥśepa (p. 72) was recited. The king made a circuit in his chariot, and carried out a mock cattle-raid (or a mock fight with a *rājanya*). Then he was seated upon a throne of *khadira* wood, covered with a tiger-skin. A brahmin handed him the sacrificial sword; he handed it to his brother; his brother to the *sūta*; the *sūta* to the village headman; the headman to the common tribesman (*sajāta*), lest there should be confusion of classes and so that social order should be preserved.<sup>7</sup> It has been suggested that the *daśa-peya* ceremony, which followed and in which *soma* was drunk by ten groups of ten, after it has been sacrificed by the king, was a ritual

<sup>5</sup> SB 9, 3, 4, 8.

<sup>6</sup> The *abhiṣeka* alone was the simplest inauguration ceremony: Gonda, *Kingship* 87.

<sup>7</sup> SB 5, 4, 4, 19.



marriage of king and people.<sup>1</sup> The importance in the king's household of the *sūta*, who was bard and charioteer, and the *māgadha*, who preserved his genealogy, has already been mentioned (p. 54). The *Vāja-peya* is discussed by Gonda (pp. 84-89) and fully described by Hillebrandt (*Rituallitteratur* 141 ff.) who suggests that it was not confined to the conferment of the rank of *samrāt* but could be used to confer any rise in status. The details of the rite add nothing for our purpose. The heir apparent (*yuvarāja*) was chosen during the king's reign, but it is not known how he was chosen. In the *Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣma was chosen by his father Śāntanu. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma was chosen by his father, but there could have been a ratification by the people.<sup>2</sup> Skandagupta was appointed by his father, according to the Allahabad inscription.

The king's person was sacred. He had to be without physical blemish: any fault in him, physical or moral, brought misfortune on his kingdom. So it was that Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the *Mahābhārata* could not become king, because he was blind. A virtuous king brought prosperity on his people. When Rāma was king, no widow mourned; neither beasts of prey nor diseases were to be feared; there were no enemies; all men were happy and observed *dharma*; trees, always flowering, always bore fruit; it rained in due seasons; the wind was pleasant; everyone was content.<sup>3</sup> The king was the guardian, even

<sup>1</sup> Heesterman, *op. cit.*, 193 f. *Daśa-peya* was the last *soma*-sacrifice of the *rāja-sūya*.

<sup>2</sup> *Rām.* 2, 1-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Rām.* 6, 128, 99 ff. cited by Gonda *op. cit.* 10. For the virtuous, king in Ireland See pp. 131 and 133 n.1.

the embodiment of *dharma*. He is called *dharmasya goptā* (Ait. B. vii 17) and *dharmātmā* (*Rām.* 1, 1, 29). He was law-giver and judge in times of peace, and leader in battle, but he was not an absolute monarch. His power was restrained by the brahmins, and there was a council (*sabhā*) and also a popular assembly (*v. sup.*). He governed through his ministers, whom he should consult.<sup>1</sup> He was primarily the protector of his people, and his most important duty was to further their moral and material welfare. Where there was no king, there was no order and the people suffered. He therefore appears as the upholder of *ṛta*, Truth, as Lüders has explained it (p. 129)<sup>2</sup>

History begins in Ireland with the fifth century, and we find the country divided into scores of petty kingdoms called *tuath* (pl. *tuatha*). The ruler of the *tuath* is called *ri* 'king', and there were larger territories, comprising several *tuatha*, of which the superior king was called *ruire* 'over-king', perhaps the equivalent of the Vedic *samrāt*; but it is not certain what the grouping was in the fifth century over the whole country. An ideal division of Ireland into Five 'Fifths' (*cóiceda*) is already then traditional, and it was probably the same in origin as the Indian division into five regions, which we find in the *Brāhmaṇas*: east, south, west, north and centre.<sup>3</sup> They are simply the four points of the compass, and the centre, or in India often the zenith, as fifth. This solution of the problem of the Five Fifths was first proposed by

<sup>1</sup> Gonda, *Kingship* 134 ff, Ray Chaudhuri 172 ff; Manu VII is an account of the duties of the king.

<sup>2</sup> H. Lüders, *Varuṇa* 405.

<sup>3</sup> Ait. Br. viii 14; A. and B. Rees, CH 146 ff.



O'Rahilly<sup>1</sup>, and is gradually gaining approval. We do know that the *Ulaid* were dominant in the north, over a territory roughly the same as the modern province of Ulster, the *Laigin* in the south-east, and the *Connachta* (sometimes called *Na Téora Connachta* 'The Three Connachts') in the west. In the south there were several smaller kingdoms, many or most of which were held by families belonging to a people called *Érainn*; and in the fifth century there emerges in Munster the dominant kingdom of *Cashel*, founded by a new dynasty, the *Éoganacht*, who were apparently the first Christian dynasty in Ireland. The *Éoganacht* were not *Érainn* but *Goedil* like the *Connachta*, and they soon established several lesser kingdoms in the south-west.

In the centre was the kingdom of Meath. The Irish word *Mide* means 'central', and is identical with Sanskrit *madhya* 'middle'. The capital of this central kingdom was *Tara*, which seems to have been an ancient pagan sanctuary. The cult of a central sacred place was known elsewhere among the Celts, in Gaul and in Galatia (p. 26)<sup>2</sup>, and it recalls the Vedic notion of the king's throne as the centre of the earth through which passes the *axis mundi*.<sup>3</sup> If there were never five kingdoms, the 'five regions' can be clearly defined, and with the absorption of Meath into Leinster after the Norman Invasion, four regions still remain as the four provinces of Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> *Celtica* 2 (1950), 387 ff.

<sup>2</sup> CR 6; Uisnech in Co. Westmeath is sometimes regarded as the centre of Ireland, see EIHM 151 f.

<sup>3</sup> Gonda, *op. cit.* 109.

The larger kingdoms were ruled by a *ri ruirech* 'king of superior kings',<sup>1</sup> to whom the kings paid tribute and gave hostages. He may sometimes be called *ard-ri* 'high king', but the term has no legal connotation. The *ri ruirech* is the highest king known to the early law-tracts.<sup>2</sup> The *Book of Rights*, which dates only from the twelfth century, but preserves the territorial divisions of an earlier time, names ninetyseven *tuatha*, which would mean that there were ninety-seven kings in Ireland. The *tuath* was thus a rural community, numbering a few thousand people.

The Irish law of dynastic succession was based upon the *derbfine*, the family group already defined (p. 91). Any member of the *derbfine* was eligible to succeed, and election was perhaps by the nobles (*flaithi*), but we have no account of it in the law-tracts or elsewhere. Binchy suggests that the *tánaise* (successor) was chosen by agreement between the new king and all those eligible to succeed, and the choice then ratified by the assembly of freemen (*airecht*).<sup>3</sup> In theory he would then succeed without further election, but in fact the king was often killed by an ambitious rival, who then succeeded by force. The ceremony of inauguration is of particular interest because it retained a great deal of its pre-Christian tradition, even though it was presumably attended

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sanskrit *mahārājadhirāja*.

<sup>2</sup> *Celtic Kingship* 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 27. Among the Hittites a system of election by the nobles seems to have been the earliest. Later the king appointed his successor, subject to ratification by the assembly. This may have a bearing on succession to the kingship both in Ireland and in India. See A. Götz, *Kulturgeschichte* (1933) 80, cited by Bonfante, *Ricerche Linguistiche* IV (1958) 167.



by Christian priests.<sup>1</sup> It was regarded as a wedding of the king to Sovereignty, perhaps earlier thought of as a goddess of prosperity and fertility. (Later the king was supposed to marry his kingdom.) It will be recalled that the notion of a marriage of the sacrificing king to the goddess Śrī appears in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, and we have seen that Heesterman stresses the idea of a sacred wedding in connection with the Vedic rite of *daśa-peya*.

The notion of a goddess of sovereignty whom the king must wed is a commonplace of Irish literature. We meet with it in the person of Medb, the legendary queen of Connacht, whose name seems to mean 'intoxication'. She had many husbands, for only by mating with her could a man become king of Ireland: *no cor faí Medb lasin mac Nirba ri Éirenn Cormac* 'until Medb slept with the lad, Cormac was not King of Ireland.'<sup>2</sup> It occurs in legends about an old hag who demands the embrace of the hero, and is transformed by his kiss into a beautiful girl. She tells him that she is the sovereignty of Ireland and that he will be king.<sup>3</sup> This motif is thought to survive as that of the 'loathly damsel' in Arthurian literature.<sup>4</sup> The king was originally an incarnation of the divine ancestor-god of the tribe, and I suggest that the notion of his marriage with a goddess of sovereignty is akin to that of Śiva having a companion goddess as *śaktī*, or source of power.

<sup>1</sup> This was certainly so in post-Norman times, for which we have several accounts.

<sup>2</sup> ZCP 17, 139. See G. Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée* II (Paris, 1971) 331 ff.

<sup>3</sup> CR 93 f.; P. Mac Cana, *Études Celtiques* 1, 76, 356; 8, 59; W. Stopres, RC 24, 173.

<sup>4</sup> ZCP 30, 354.

The idea that the king should be married to his kingdom survived into modern times in the Jacobite poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when Ireland is thought of as a girl abandoned by her lover, or awaiting his return to deliver her.<sup>1</sup> The accounts that have been preserved of the actual rite of inauguration are with one exception meagre and late. The single exception is the description by Giraldus Cambrensis, writing in the thirteenth century, of a barbarous rite said to have been practised by certain people in Tryconnell:

'The whole people of that country being gathered into one place, a white mare is led into the midst of them, and he who is to be inaugurated not as a prince but as a brute, not as a king but as an outlaw, comes before the people on all fours, confessing himself a beast with no less impudence than imprudence. The mare being immediately killed and cut into pieces and boiled, a bath is prepared for him from the broth. Sitting in this, he eats the flesh which is brought to him, the people standing round and partaking of it also. He is required to drink of the broth in which he is bathed, not drawing it in a vessel, but lapping it with his mouth. These unrighteous rites being duly accomplished his royal authority and dominion are ratified'.<sup>2</sup>

This sacred marriage with fertility, here represented by a mare, has an astonishing parallel in the Hindu *aśva-medha* or 'horse-sacrifice'.<sup>1</sup> In this rite, after the stallion has been

<sup>1</sup> The two ideas are combined in the closing lines of a splendid play by the Irish poet, Yeats, called *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*.

<sup>2</sup> *Topographia Hiberniae*, III 25.

<sup>3</sup> Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII 1-5.



slain, the principal spouse of the king submits to a symbolic union with it, and the victim is then dismembered.<sup>1</sup> In India therefore the ritual is the reverse of the Irish, but one can hardly doubt that both derive from a common source. In India the queen is to be assured of fertility. In Ireland it is the king and his kingdom and people who are made fertile. The horse-sacrifice has been apparently assimilated to the notion of the king's wedding with Sovereignty. It is an interesting fact that down to modern times the inauguration rite of Irish kings was called *banais rige* 'wedding of a kingdom'.

The underlying notion of a sacred marriage is a Greek tradition also. And the association of the horse with fertility appears in the cult of Poseidon, who was lord of the earth. Poseidon and Demeter were sometimes represented as stallion and mare. This survival of an ancient inauguration rite in Ireland and in India is, however, a remarkable link between Celts and Indo-Aryans.

Two other sources, which are plainly legendary, record some curious beliefs in connection with the kingship of Tara. In a saga of the Ulster Cycle, *The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn*, a means of divination is described, by which the kings could discover who should become king of Tara:

'They made a 'bull-sleep' so that they might learn from it to whom they should give the kingship. The way in which that 'bull-sleep' was made was as follows: they used to kill a white bull, and one man used to eat his fill of its flesh and its broth and sleep when thus sated. And four druids used to sing a spell of

<sup>1</sup> Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII 5.2.2.

truth over him, and he used to see in a dream the kind of man who was to be made king both in form and description, and the kind of work he was doing. The man awoke from his sleep, and told the kings his vision, a young warrior, noble and strong, wearing two red girdles, and standing by the pillow of a sick man in *Emain Macha*.<sup>1</sup>

Messengers were sent to *Emain Macha*, and Lugaid of the Red Stripes was found there, standing by Cú Chulainn's bed; and he was made king and slept at Tara that same night.

Another older story which belongs to the class of Origin Tales, gives a conflicting account of *Lugaid's* going to Tara in which curious traditions are preserved:

'*Lugaid* of the Red Stripes was excluded from the kingship, when the *Laigin* and *Cenél Cuind Chétchathaig* were making a king at Tara after the death of *Etarscéil*. There was a royal chariot at Tara. Two horses that had never been yoked before used to be yoked to the chariot. The chariot used to rise up against anyone whom the Sovereignty of Tara would not accept, so that he could not enter it, and the horses used to rear against him. And there was a royal mantle in the chariot: the mantle was too big for anyone whom the Sovereignty of Tara would not accept. And there were two stones in Tara, *Blocc* and *Bluigne*: they would open before him whom they would accept, so that the chariot used

<sup>1</sup> Sillon (ed.) *Serglige Con Culainn* 244-53. The 'bull-sleep' is mentioned also in the story of the election of *Conaire Mor* to the kingship of Tara, *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostels* 11 (AIT 97).



to pass between them. And there was *Fál*, a stone phallus at the end of the chariot's course.<sup>1</sup> *Fál* would cry out when the wheel-rim of the chariot passed, so that all could hear it, for one whom the Sovereignty of Tara accepted. For him whom the Sovereignty of Tara did not accept, the two stones would not open: the edge of one's hand would hardly pass between them. For him whom the Sovereignty of Tara did not accept, *Fál* did not cry out. They did not accept *Lugaid* of the Red Stripes once *Eterscéil* had been slain.<sup>2</sup>

The greatest of these inauguration ceremonies was the Feast of Tara (*Feis Temra*), but we have no description of it apart from the beliefs recorded in the Origin Legend just mentioned. It is believed to be a ritual marriage of the new king to the goddess Medb.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the accounts that we have are post-Norman, but they are not without interest for our purpose. Sometimes when a superior king was being inaugurated, one of the inferior kings put on his shoe. At the inauguration of O'Connor of Connacht, MacDermot at Moylurg put on his shoe. At the inauguration of O'Neill of Ailech, O'Kane threw a shoe over his head. An entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters* says: 'Felim Finn O'Connor was inaugurated by O'Donnell, MacWilliam and MacDermot in as meet a

<sup>1</sup> Lit. 'fair-green'. It may be recalled that the Hindu rite of *Rāja-sūya* included a mock chariot-race (or cattle-raid) which the king must win (p. 103).

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to a legend that Eterscéil, king of Tara, was slain by Nuadu Necht to make way for Lugaid, *Eriu* 6, 131.

<sup>3</sup> *Celtic Kingship* 11.

manner as any man had for some time before been nominated; and his shoes were put on him by MacDermot.<sup>1</sup>

O'Donovan states the conditions of inauguration of an Irish king in the post-Norman period as follows:

1. that he be of the blood of the original conqueror of the territory, free from physical defects and of fit age to lead his men in battle;
2. that a majority of the freemen declare for him;
3. that the inauguration be held at a place appointed of old, where there was a sacred stone;
4. that the hereditary chronicler of the territory be present to read to the king the laws relating to his conduct, and that the king swear to obey them;
5. that the historian, or some other person whose office it was, hand him a straight white rod as a sceptre, and as an emblem of purity and rectitude, to indicate that his people must obey him;
6. that after he has received the white rod, one of his sub-chiefs put on his shoe in token of obedience, or throw a shoe over his head in token of good luck;
7. that after the ceremonies one of the sub-chiefs pronounce his family-name, without the first name, which was then repeated by the clergy and laymen present.

Then the king turned round thrice forwards and thrice backwards(?) in order to view his people and territory in every direction,<sup>2</sup> after which he was the lawful king.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> FM IV 1160 (A.D. 1488).

<sup>2</sup> This recalls the Hindu rite in which the king walked towards the five regions in turn, *SB* 5, 4, 1, 3-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Hy Fiachrach* 451-52.



O'Donovan does not give authority for all these details, but his knowledge of the sources was enormous. No. 2 and no. 4 of the conditions he states seem to me likely to be guess-work. I know of no such laws, nor of such an oath. The white rod and the putting on of the shoes are mentioned in the annals, and other details occur elsewhere. In an account of the inauguration of O'Conor, it is said that O'Mulconry gave him 'the rod of kingship'. His horse and clothing are given to the Abbot of Assylin, and the abbot mounts the horse from O'Conor's back!<sup>1</sup> Similar accounts of the inauguration of O'Dowd by O'Caomhain and Mac Fribis and also of the inauguration of O'Donovan by MacCarthy have been preserved: 'Mac Cartie delivered him a Rodd wherefore he entered to all the Lordshipp and lands'.<sup>2</sup> Here the superior king is inaugurating an inferior king.

The king was sacred. He was subject to various tabus, and was capable of performing auspicious actions which brought prosperity to his kingdom. They are recorded in an old text, perhaps of the eighth century, called 'The auspicious things and tabus of Irish kings'. For example, it was tabu for the king of Tara to be in bed at Tara after sunrise; to break a journey in Mag Breg on a Wednesday; to cross Mag Cuilenn after sunset; to strike his horses on a Tuesday, to enter north Tethba on a Tuesday, and so on. It was tabu for the king of Leinster to go widdershins around Fortuatha Laigen; to sleep between the river Dodder and Dublin with his head to one side; to camp for nine days on the plains of Cualu; to travel over Dublin Pass on a

<sup>1</sup> *Medieval Studies presented to Aubrey Gwynn*, Dublin 1967, 197.

<sup>2</sup> *Hy Fiachrach* 440, 446.

Monday; or to ride a dirty black-heeled horse over Mag Maisten.<sup>1</sup>

A man with any physical blemish could not become king, and if he became blind or maimed in any way, he lost his kingship. Cormac ceased to be king when he was blinded by Oengus of the Dreadful Spear, see ZCP 27, 47-48. In the historical period a contender for the kingship often seized and maimed his rival, so as to make him unfit. Moreover the king was bound by the magic power of Truth (*infra*, p. 109). The king was far from being an absolute monarch. In the historic period he was neither lawgiver nor judge, although there are legends about judgments given by kings in the distant past. He was even subject to the law, for by a curious provision one could sue a commoner, designated to answer for private claims against the king and known as the 'substituted churl' (*aithech fortha*).<sup>2</sup> In peace-time his functions are few, but he was the embodiment of his people's welfare, and in a sense everything depended upon him. In war he was the leader in battle, and if he was killed the battle was over.

A comparison of the evidence about Indian kingship in the Vedic Age and Celtic kingship as described in Irish sources gives the impression that a good deal is common to East and West. The name is the same, and seems to connote in each case a tribal king whose principal duty was to protect his people and to preserve cosmic order, thought of as Truth (p. 104). In the manner of his election there may well be common features. The picture is dim on both sides, but it may become clearer. In the rite of inauguration,

<sup>1</sup> *PRIA LIV C* (1951) pp. 1 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Celtic Kingship* 17.



the rod and the ritual steps towards the five regions may have been common to both traditions. The Indian evidence may throw some light on Irish practice in the inauguration rite and the Irish *derbfine* system might help to explain the Indian method of succession to the kingship. The distinction of *rājā* and *saṃrāj*, of *ri* and *ruire* (or perhaps *ri ruirech*) may be significant. And then there is the concept of Truth as a magic power, somehow identified with order in society and in nature, which is discussed in the next chapter.

It remains to consider what can be claimed as common to Indian and Irish customary law. The earliest Irish documents that survive, apart from inscriptions, consist of law-tracts, composed in verse, obviously for recitation, and evidently preserved by oral tradition for hundreds of years. Binchy says of them: 'The parallelism between the Irish and the Hindu law-books, both of them the work of a privileged professional class, is often surprisingly close: it extends not merely to form and technique, but even to diction'.<sup>1</sup> The Indian family-group of four generations has already been mentioned in connection with succession to the kingship. In the matters of inheritance, and of liability for the debts of a deceased person, it was also the normal unit.<sup>1</sup> In Ireland it is again the members of the *derbfine* who are entitled to share an inheritance and bound to share a liability.<sup>2</sup>

There is an interesting point of agreement in the provision for inheritance by a daughter, when there are no sons

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Law Tracts* 23.

<sup>2</sup> J. Jolly, *Recht und Sitte* 77, 85, 99 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Irish Law Tracts* 31 (223).

in the family. The Sanskrit term is *putrikā* ('like a son') and in Irish she is called *ban-chomarbae* 'female heir'.<sup>1</sup>

In connection with the status of women a passage occurs in Manu that is closely echoed in an Irish tract:<sup>2</sup> 'Her father protects her in child-hood, her husband protects her in youth, and her sons protect her in old age. A woman is never fit for independence' (Manu IX 3). The Irish text says: 'A woman is not capable of selling anything without one of her guardians. Her father protects her when she is a girl; her husband protects her when she is a wife; her sons protect her when she is a mother; her kin protect her when she is a woman of kin; the Church protects her when she is a woman of the Church' (see *Early Irish Law* 213).

Given the fact of the subjection of women in an ancient society, the doctrine is commonplace, but the similarity of wording is remarkable.

The resemblance between the forms of marriage in Ireland and in India is also impressive. In India there were eight forms of marriage, *brāhma*, *daiva*, *ārṣa*, *prājāpatya*, *āsura*, *gāndharva*, *rākṣasa*, and *paiśāca*. In the first four the daughter is given by her father without purchase by the bridegroom. The fifth is marriage by purchase, the sixth is a voluntary union of maiden and lover, the seventh is forcible abduction (proper for a warrior), the eighth is mere seduction by stealth, and is called a base and sinful rite (Manu III 20-34). In Ireland likewise there were various forms of marriage. Ten classes are recognised in the law-tract on marriage, of which only nine are explained. The first three

<sup>1</sup> Manu IX 127-140. R. Thurneysen and others, *Studies in Early Irish Law* 183 f.



are regular marriages, differing in the proportions of wealth brought by each party, equal proportions, wealth brought in by the man, and wealth brought in by the woman. The others are temporary unions, and two of these agree exactly with two of the Indian forms, marriage by force (*lánamnas écne*) and seduction by stealth (*lánamnas tothla*). Indeed a third, 'union accepted on the man's invitation', may be equated with the *gāndharva*-marriage of the Hindus, the voluntary union of maiden and lover.

We cannot claim exact agreement in the number of the forms of marriage or in the details of classification, but the fact remains that several forms are recognised, the numbers are close, eight and ten, and three in each group are the same. Indeed, it has been suggested that two of the Irish forms represent a later development.<sup>1</sup>

The law concerning suretyship is a subject in which the Irish custom shows great archaism, and the Irish evidence may throw light upon Indo-European origins. The texts were edited long ago by Thurneysen, but have only recently been expounded in English.<sup>2</sup> For the benefit of Indian readers, it will be useful to summarise the Irish evidence here. According to Irish law, there were three kinds of surety, *naidm*, *aitire*, and *ráth*. The first of these, supposed to be the earliest, was a man who undertook to compel a debtor to pay his debt. He could do so by mere distraint, or even by force if necessary, by seizing and imprisoning him; but he did not assume liability for the debt himself. He would

<sup>1</sup> *Early Irish Law* p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Binchy, *Celtic Suretyship. A fossilized Indo-European Institution?* in G. Cardona and others, *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans* (Philadelphia, 1970).

therefore normally be a nobleman of whom the debtor was a client, or a person in some situation in relation to the debtor such as enabled him to compel him. If the debtor should fail, he was bound to pay the *naidm*, the amount of his honour-price, as well as ultimately paying the original debt.

The second, whose name means 'between-man' from the preposition *etir* 'between' (Skr. *antar*), pledged his person in guarantee, but not his property: nor could he free himself by simply paying the sum due. That is to say that if the debtor defaulted, he was obliged to surrender himself into the custody of the creditor until the debt was paid. Such a surety would not require to be of noble rank, as he was pledging his liberty and would have a very strong motive to enforce performance by the debtor, and presumably some confidence in his power to do so. Moreover, in case of default, the *aitire's* claim against his principal was very high, so as to compensate for his being held in custody. He could purchase his liberty from the creditor after ten days by paying the 'body-fine' (*corpdire*) of a free Irishman, a very large sum, and he could claim that amount, in addition to his 'honour-price' from the debtor in turn.

The third was the ordinary surety of later times who undertook simply to pay the debt himself, if the debtor failed to do so. He could then claim from the debtor double the amount of the debt in addition to his 'honour-price', and compensation for disturbance; and he could proceed to levy this amount directly by distraint.

Binchy suggests that the *naidm*, the enforcing surety, was the oldest, and the *ráth*, the surety for payment, the latest. The *aitire* would be an adaptation of the political system of hostageship to the needs of private contracts.



As regards Indian customs of suretyship, Manu gives us no information at all except that a surety for the appearance of a debtor who fails to produce him is liable for the amount of the debt (VIII, 158), and Jolly says that the giving of pledges is treated in greater detail than suretyship by the jurists.<sup>1</sup> Sureties were normally liable for the amount of the debt.<sup>2</sup> Here it seems that there is nothing in the Indian tradition to set beside the archaism of Irish theory, but Indian readers may find the Irish evidence to be of some interest.

There is however one curious practice in connection with the collection of debts by a creditor, which is common to India and Ireland and must surely go back to the Indo-European age, namely 'the creditor's fast'. The Irish custom has been discussed by Thurneysen<sup>3</sup> and the Indian custom by Renou<sup>4</sup> and others, and the similarity is unmistakable and most impressive. The Sanskrit word for it is *prāyopaveśana*, and the procedure was that the creditor fasted in front of the house of the debtor until he obtained satisfaction. We have no early account of it, but it is referred to in Manu (VIII, 49) and even in a source of the Vedic period, the Dharmasūtra of Āpastamba. Here a list of those in whose company one may not eat begins: 'a drunkard, a fool, a prisoner, a creditor who is seated against a debtor, and he who causes him to sit so long.'<sup>5</sup> The legal procedure in Ireland is stated in the tract on

<sup>1</sup> *Recht und Sitte*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> ZCP 15, 260 ff.

<sup>4</sup> JA 234. (1943-45) 117 ff.; cf. *Recht und Sitte*, pp. 112, 148.

<sup>5</sup> *Āpastambīya-Dharmasūtra* I 6, 19, 1 = *Hiranyakeśin* I 5, 19.

distrainment in the first volume of the *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, p. 112. The relevant text has been edited and discussed by Thurneysen, *loc. cit.*:

'Notice precedes distrainment according to Irish law except when the process is against a *nemed*-person (i.e. a nobleman, a cleric, or a poet). Fasting precedes levying against them.

One who does not give a pledge in response to fasting is an evader of all things. He who holds out against everything receives no atonement from cleric or layman.

The judgment according to Irish law is that he who takes food without fulfilling a demand supported by fasting shall pay double the amount of that on account of which he is subjected to fasting.

He who continues to fast after satisfaction of his demand has been offered to him forfeits his right to bring the suit, according to Irish law.

In Irish law the proper way to end the fast is either to bind the debt upon a good surety who does not abscond, or to give a pledge from the articles of the household equal in value to the amount for which he is subjected to fasting.

Thurneysen's discussion shows that the process in Ireland was formal in historic times, and, as it were, vestigial. The fast was for one night only, but originally it would have been a fast till death, with liability for death upon the debtor.

Jolly, *Recht und Sitte* 147-48, refers briefly to the Indian procedure: 'There is a curious procedure for collecting a debt by 'the traditional means' (*ācarita*), which is explained as by 'fasting' (*abhojana*) or 'awaiting death by abstaining



from food' (*prāyopaveśana*) . . . . Akin to this is the practice of *dharmā* (*dharma*-) formerly employed throughout India, and still employed in Nepal, by which the creditor, specially if he was a brahmin, fasted in front of the debtor's house until he yielded. The debtor was obliged to fast also, and to abstain from work; if the brahmin died, the debtor incurred the guilt of killing a brahmin'.

There can be little doubt that we have here, East and West, the survival of an ancient Indo-European rite.<sup>1</sup>

Two other matters may be mentioned as marking both Hindu and Celtic society. In Gaul, in Britain, and in Ireland, the Celts fought from chariots (p. 27). In the sagas Cú Chulainn and Loeg, his charioteer, are central figures. The other two most prominent heroes, Conall Cernach and Loegaire Buadach are also chariot-fighters. A warrior is commonly thought of in connection with his chariot and charioteer.<sup>2</sup> The same is true in India. At the consecration of a king (*rāja-sūya*) after the *abhiṣeka*, the king drives in a chariot and makes a mock cattle-raid (p. 173). In the *Mahābhārata* Krishna acts as Arjuna's charioteer. The Celts in their earliest documents appear as drivers, not as riders; and in battle the chariot and the charioteer are always in the foreground. In India the same is true: the king and his nobles fought from chariots.<sup>3</sup> Even the *asuras*, and in the *Avesta* the *ahuras*, drive through the air in their

<sup>1</sup> This custom of fasting by a creditor among both Celts and Hindus was first observed, so far as I know, by Whitley Stokes in the *Academy* 28 (1885) 169.

<sup>2</sup> E. O'Curry, *Mann. and Cust.* I cccclxxvii—ccccclxxxiii; II 299 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Apte says that horse-riding was practised in the Vedic period, but no evidence is given, see R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age* 355.

war-chariots. In the *Rigveda* the gods are imagined as coming to the sacrifice in chariots.

The other dominant theme is wealth in cattle. This is no doubt proper to a rural society and need cause no surprise; but in Ireland and in India it is more than an economic fact. In mythology, in nomenclature, as a symbol, as well as in daily life, the cow represents fortune, prosperity, the satisfaction of the needs and desires of men. In Irish saga cattle-raiding is a recurrent theme, and the words *táin bó* 'driving of cattle' begin the title of several tales. In Irish history cattle-raiding seems to have been a normal enterprise. And in India 'raids into neighbouring territory were frequent and normal for winning booty which the king shared with people'.<sup>1</sup> In the *Mahābhārata* the Kauravas raid the Matsya country of king Virāṭa and carry off his cattle.

In the *Vedas* cows are the proper measure of value, and gold only later became the standard.<sup>2</sup> In Ireland cows remained the measure as long as the old order lasted. There was no Irish coinage until after the Norman Conquest. And this constant awareness of cattle as bringers of prosperity played a large part in the religious thinking of Celt and Hindu.

In Vedic mythology, the finding of the cows by Saramā, and Indra and Agni setting them free, is a well known tradition, and the freeing of the cows is often associated with the freeing of the waters by Indra when he slew the demon Vṛitra. Sometimes the two events seem to be combined into one, and the rivers are thought of as cows, giving water

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Jolly, pp. 96 f.



as cows give milk.<sup>1</sup> The word for 'cow' occurs in the river-names *Gomatī* ('possessing cows') and *Godāvarī* ('giving cows'),<sup>2</sup> a fact which I take to be rooted in the same conception.

The word for 'cow' also occurs in river-names in Ireland, where *Bó* is the old name of the Boyle River in Co. Roscommon. *Bó Nemid* ('sacred cow') is the name of a river in Ulster<sup>3</sup>, and *Bó Guaire* ('Guaire's cow') is the old name of the Blackwater in Co. Meath.

The most interesting example of this conception is the Irish form of the name of the river Boyne in Meath, *Boand* < \**guou-uindā* 'cow-finder'. The same compound appears in Sanskrit as *Govinda*, an epithet of Krishna, and evidently a term of praise, later often used as a personal name.<sup>4</sup> It seems as though the myth of the finding of the cows goes back to the period when they were first domesticated and became a precious new source of food.<sup>5</sup> That the association of flowing milk with flowing water, so precious in India and so unwelcome in Ireland, should survive in these Irish river-names is remarkable, but the reason is in the prestige of cattle, which apparently gave birth to a myth in the Indo-European period.

<sup>1</sup> 'Like lowing cows, the water hastened down to the sea' RV I 32, 2.

<sup>2</sup> So Wackernagel IP<sup>2</sup> 896, but Mayrhofer prefers to regard the etymology as doubtful.

<sup>3</sup> PRIA 54 (1951) C 1, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> See S. K. Chatterji, 'Sanskrit *Govinda*: Old Irish *Boand*' in *New Indology* (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> For evidence of the importance of cattle in the earliest period of Indo-European culture, see A. M. Mandelshtam, *Monuments of the Bronze Age in South Tajikistan* (1970).

The belief in the sacredness of the cow is expressed in extravagant form in a hymn of the Atharvaveda (X 10)<sup>1</sup>: heaven and earth and the waters are protected by the cow: the gods who breathe in the cow know the cow; the cow is the mother of the warrior; thought originated in her. And finally the brahmin shows his hand: only he who knows this secret may accept a cow as a gift, and he who gives a cow to the brahmins gains all the worlds.

The myth appears in the effigy of a bull on the Paris 'altar' (pl. 13) and in shadowy form in *Táin Bó Cualnge*, which ends with the fight of the two divine bulls. In India the god Indra is often referred to as a bull, as are also Agni and Dyaus upon occasion.<sup>2</sup> In the Mahābhārata the bull is *dharma*. Later the bull becomes associated with Śiva. But the original myth which lies behind the Taruos Trigaranus is lost to us. The myths of the releasing of the cows from a cave by Indra, and of his slaying the demon Vritra to release the waters, are indeed enough to explain the river-names that occur in Sanskrit and in Irish. Lüders maintains that in the Rigveda the heavenly waters are commonly thought of as cows.<sup>3</sup>

Finally there is similarity between the Hindu calendar and the Gaulish calendar which was discovered in a vineyard at Coligny in 1897.<sup>4</sup>

Many fragments of a bronze tablet were unearthed, and they proved to be a table of sixty-two consecutive months, approximately equal to five solar years. The months are

<sup>1</sup> Trsl. Keith, 405.

<sup>2</sup> MacDonnell, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Varuṇa* 616 f., cf. p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> See CR p. 15.



of thirty or twenty-nine days, and are divided into two halves (15+15 or 15+14). The months of thirty days (except EQUOS) are marked as auspicious (MAT.) and those of twenty-nine days as inauspicious (ANM.). But certain days in an auspicious month are not lucky, and certain days in an inauspicious month are lucky. The second half of the month has the heading ATENOUX ('returning night?'), so that the division was apparently into a bright half and a dark half; and MacNeill has shown that the seventh, eighth and ninth days of the month were days of the full moon.<sup>1</sup> The lunar year of twelve months was adapted to the solar year by intercalation of an extra month of thirty days in every third year. This year had thus thirteen months, twelve named months and one extra month of thirty days, each day of which was named from one of the twelve in serial order. The extra month had, as it were, no days of its own, and was intercalated so as to bring the lunar and solar cycles into approximate accord. In the division of the month into a bright and a dark half, in the month of twenty-nine or thirty days with a three-year cycle, at the end of which an intercalary month was added, this Gaulish calendar resembles one of the systems presented by Zimmer as employed in India.<sup>2</sup> As in the case of the Laws, we may well recognise here the survival of ancient lore that was the possession of the common ancestor of Hindu brahmin and Gaulish druid.

<sup>1</sup> *Eriu* 10 (1926-28), 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Altindisches Leben* 370, where he cites *Taittirīya Samhitā* 5, 7, 2, 4. Loth observes an agreement in the reserving of the fourteenth day for a funeral feast (*Comptes rendus* 1909, pp. 24-25).

## RELIGION

Here as throughout this little book my purpose is to present the evidence on either side which may suggest a common origin, and therefore an Indo-European origin, for beliefs or practices of Celts and Indo-Aryans. I shall not attempt a general discussion, even in summary, of the religion of the Veda or the religion of the Celts.

The most striking resemblance between the two cultures is the presence, already observed (pp. 24 f., 98), in both societies of a whole class devoted to priestly and learned pursuits, the brahmins in India and the druids in Gaul, and the privileged status that they enjoyed. In India even the king defers to the brahmins (p. 104) and among the Celts the druids enjoyed the same prestige. Diodorus describes how in Gaul in war-time they are carefully obeyed and can intervene between opposing armies (p. 24). In the Irish sagas there are several examples of the druid using his authority in the same way. In *Bricriu's Feast* when the warriors are fighting for the Hero's Portion, it is *Sencha*, the druid, who tells the king to separate them.<sup>1</sup> In *The In-*

<sup>1</sup> EIL 20.



toxication of the Ulstermen, Sencha makes peace when the warriors fight about the king's visit.<sup>1</sup> In *The Cattle-Raid of Cooley* the king may not speak until his druid has spoken.<sup>2</sup>

Power corrupted both brahmin and druid, and they became a burden to their patrons. The greed and arrogance of the brahmin is shown in Vedic texts in which they claim even to be gods, and declare that the people have a duty to honour them and to give them presents. Even the king may under no circumstances touch the property of a brahmin.<sup>3</sup> The lavish rewards that they received for their poems appear from the *dāna-stutis* in the Rigveda (p. 56). The tone of the Atharvaveda is more revealing, and here 'the brahmins' supposed privileges have been shamelessly asserted'.<sup>4</sup>

In Ireland the position is strangely similar. The *filid*, who were poets and seem to have inherited the privileged status of the druids, expected rich rewards in cattle and land for their poems. If they were not sufficiently rewarded, they resorted to satire (*der*), and their satire had the power of disfiguring a reluctant giver. In several sagas there are episodes which illustrate this belief,<sup>5</sup> and one of the stories is a satire upon the satirists. The story entitled *Guaire's Burdensome Guests* (*Tromdám Guair*) is an extravagant satire on their exactions. *Senchán*, chief poet of Ireland, is

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Watson, ed. *Mesca Ulad* 118.

<sup>2</sup> EII 10.

<sup>3</sup> Winternitz, HIL I 199.

<sup>4</sup> B. K. Ghosh in *The Vedic Age* 409; cf. the hymns AV. 5, 17 and 12. 4. cited on pp. 408-09.

<sup>5</sup> See E. Knott, *Irish Classical Poetry*, 63 f. For Satire by Indian poets see p. 57.

represented as making impossible demands on behalf of his retinue, blackberries in winter, a cloak made of spider's webs, and so on, so that he might satirise King *Guaire*, who was famous for his hospitality. The king contrives to fulfil them only with the help of his brother, the holy hermit *Marbán*; and *Marbán* finally humiliates and subdues the importunate poet.<sup>1</sup>

There is a tradition, which seems to have no historical foundation, that at the assembly of *Druimm Cett* in 575 it was proposed to expel the *filid* from Ireland on account of their greed and arrogance, and that Saint Columba, who was himself a poet, protected them.<sup>2</sup> The existence of this distinct social class of priests and poets was an institution common to Celt and Hindu, and its character and subsequent history are alike in both cultures.

In the matter of belief, there is a tradition which appears to have been fundamental in India in the Vedic period, and was first recognized and fully expounded by Lüders in his great book, *Varuṇa*, namely the belief in Truth (*ṛta*) as the life-giving principle and sustaining power in the universe.<sup>3</sup> For the Aryan Indian, he says, Truth was the highest power, the ultimate cause of all being (*op. cit.* p. 24). 'The rivers flow with Truth, the sun has spread out Truth'.<sup>4</sup> The gods of the Veda are born of Truth (*ṛta-jāta*), grow on Truth (*ṛta-vṛdh*), they act by means of

<sup>1</sup> See F. N. Robinson, 'Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature' in *Studies in the History of Religions presented to C. H. Toy* (N.Y. 1912).

<sup>2</sup> LHI 162; II 53.

<sup>3</sup> See also his article, 'Die magische Kraft der Wahrheit im alten Indien', ZDMG 98 (1944) 1ff.

<sup>4</sup> RV I 105, 12.



Truth. 'By means of Truth (*satyena*)<sup>1</sup> the wind blows, by means of Truth the sun shines in the sky, Truth is the foundation of speech, everything is founded upon Truth'.<sup>2</sup> And in a later text: 'By means of Truth (*satyena*) the sun is warm, by means of Truth the sun shines, by means of Truth the wind blows, by means of Truth the earth endures'.<sup>3</sup> Truth was imagined as a mighty blaze of light, and had a local habitation in a lake in the highest heaven,<sup>4</sup> the source of the sacred river Ganges.

Lüders points out that these ideas about Truth did not first appear in India, but must be common to Indo-Iranian tradition. In the Avesta *aša* 'Truth' has exactly the same meaning as Vedic *ṛta*, and *druj* 'falsehood' the same meaning as Vedic *anṛta*. All Zoroastrian religion, he says, is dominated by the opposition between *aša* and *druj*. 'The concept *ṛta* did not arise first in India, but goes back to the Indo-Iranian or Aryan period. The concept of the heavenly home of *ṛta* probably belongs also to this period. At any rate, in the Avesta *Aša* is the name of the Paradise upon which the hope of the faithful is fixed'.<sup>5</sup>

In Ireland too this notion of Truth as the highest principle of creation, and a sustaining power, pervades the literature. The earliest illustration of it, is in a text called 'The Testament of *Morand*', which may be as early as the sixth century in its extant form, and must have a long oral

<sup>1</sup> The term *ṛta* becomes obsolete in post-Vedic literature, but the negative, *anṛta* ('falsehood') remains, and is opposed to *satya* 'truth' (p. 14).

<sup>2</sup> MNār. Up. (ed. Jacob) § 22, p. 23.8; (ed. Varenne) § 519, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> Viṣṇu VIII 27-30; and further reff., *Varuṇa* 24 n. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Varuṇa* 25 f.

<sup>5</sup> *Varuṇa* 27.

tradition behind it. Here the legendary jurist Morand, who is supposed to have lived in the time of king *Conchobar* (1st. cent. B.C.) sends a messenger to *Feradach Find Fechnach* with his 'Instructions to a Prince', and the tone is not far removed from that of the Upanishads:

Proclaim the word to him before all men!

Bring the word to him before all men!

Let him preserve Truth, it will preserve him.

Let him exalt Truth, it will exalt him.

Let him exalt compassion, it will exalt him.

For by the Prince's Truth great kingdoms are ruled

By the Prince's Truth great mortality is warded off from men.

By the Prince's Truth the great armies are driven off into the enemies' country.

By the Prince's Truth every right prevails and every vessel is full in his reign'.

By the Prince's Truth plagues and lightnings are warded off from men.

By the Prince's Truth great tribes possess great riches

By the Prince's Truth peace, quiet, joy, ease and comfort are made secure.

By the Prince's Truth armies are driven back into the enemies' countries.

By the Prince's Truth every heir sets his house-post in his fair inheritance<sup>1</sup>.....

Sixteen times the Prince's Truth is involved; and a later recension of the text adds a further grace!

<sup>1</sup> ZCP 11, 91-92, My friend Fergus Kelly has kindly helped me in the translation of this difficult passage, but he is not responsible for my choices.



'By the Prince's Truth fair weather comes in each fitting season, winter fine and frosty, spring dry and windy, summer warm with showers of rain, autumn with heavy dews and fruitful. For it is the prince's falsehood that brings perverse weather upon wicked peoples and dries up the fruit of the earth'.<sup>1</sup>

A poem in the *Book of Leinster* says 'Three things that are best for a prince during his reign are truth, mercy and silence; those that are worst for king's honour are straying from the truth and adding to the false ..... Truth in a prince is as bright as the foam cast up by a mighty wave of the sea, as the sheen of a swan's covering in the sun, as the colour of snow on a mountain. A prince's truth is an effort which overpowers armies; it brings milk into the world, it brings corn and mast'.<sup>2</sup>

Admittedly these Irish examples are limited to the concept of the 'Prince's Truth' (*Fir Flaithemon*), but the first does include the idea of Truth as a power which strengthens, protects, and exalts. Moreover, the Act of Truth and the reward for hearing a sacred text, which have been discussed already (pp. 89-96), are extensions of the belief in Truth as a power which controls the affairs of men, and are common to Indian and Irish tradition. It will hardly be doubted that the Irish examples express the same belief as has been recognised by Lüders in the Vedic *ṛta* and Avestic *aša*.

Opposed to the 'Princes' Truth' (*Fir Flaithemon*) is the 'Princes' Falsehood' (*Gau Flaithemon*), which brings misfortune upon the people as Truth brings prosperity. Among

<sup>1</sup> ZCP 11, 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Ériu* 9, 51 § 8; 52 § 54, § 37.

the early Irish didactic tracts are two which share a peculiar numerical character, one being a list of triads and the other a list of heptads, and in each of them this notion finds expression. 'Three conditions which ruin people through falsehood: the falsehoods of a king, the falsehoods of an historian, the falsehoods of a judge'.<sup>1</sup> The seven proofs of the falsehood of a king are: expelling a religious community from their precinct without process of law; suffering a satire unless it be in spite of (an offer of) satisfaction; defeat in battle; famine during his reign; dryness of milch-cows, blight of fruit, and scarcity of corn.<sup>2</sup>

One of the legends about the famous king Cormac illustrates this belief in the Prince's Truth and Prince's Falsehood in a manner that is worthy of the Jātakas. It is told that, when he was a child, he was at Tara during the reign of Lugaid Mac Con. A man was brought before the king, whose sheep had grazed the queen's woad-garden, and he declared the sheep forfeit in compensation for the woad. As he pronounced this unjust sentence, the house began to fall. The child Cormac, said at once: 'No! the shearing of the sheep is enough in compensation for the grazing of the woad, for both will grow again'. And at once the house ceased to fall, and the people said: 'That is a true judgement'. Lugaid Mac Con departed from the Kingdom, and afterwards Cormac became king, and his kingdom prospered.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Triads* 166.

<sup>2</sup> AL IV 52. *Seol* 'scarcity' is conjectural. The word also occurs apparently with this meaning at AL IV 164.2.

<sup>3</sup> See CMM §§ 63-66. An old gloss says: *is torbach du popul flaith firian leu* 'It is well for the people to have a just prince', *MI.* 90b11.



The sin of Oedipus is, of course, an example of this belief. By slaying his father and marrying his mother, he offended against Truth, which is the established order, or rather the ordering power, in the world. But the belief is not expressed in this form by Sophocles. By contrast, in the Rigveda when Yamī tries to persuade her brother Yama to commit incest, he replies in the very terms that we are discussing, *ṛtā* and *ānṛta*: 'While speaking truth (*ṛtām*), we shall be whispering falsehood (*ānṛtam*)'.<sup>1</sup>

In Ireland too there is a heavenly lake, the pool of Segais, which is the source of the Boyne and also apparently of the Shannon, although on earth the two sources are far apart.<sup>2</sup> Into that pool the hazel-nuts of Wisdom fall, and they are eaten by the salmon, from one of which Find obtained his supernatural knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The Irish tradition does not expressly connect the pool of Segais with Truth (*fir*), but the connection with knowledge is there. And the idea that the divine river Boyne has its source in the pool echoes the similar belief in India about the Ganges. The Shannon, was indeed also a goddess, and her name *Sinann* may possibly be akin to Sanskrit *Sindhu*.

It was the belief in the power of Truth which gave purpose to the bardic poetry of *sūtas* and *māgadhas* in India, and perhaps also, at least in the earliest period, to the praise-poetry of the *filid* in Ireland. By reciting the heroic deeds of the king's ancestors, and praising his courage

<sup>1</sup> RV 10, 10, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Metr. Dinds. III 26.g; 288.25-36. O'Rahilly compares the well of Mimir in Norse mythology, in which all rivers had their source, EIHM 322, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> EIHM 323, 329.

and his victories, the poet promoted his welfare and the welfare of his people. I must leave it to Greek scholars to say whether this has any application to the odes of Pindar.

Lüders himself did not arrive at the conclusion that the concept of Truth as the supreme power was as early as the Indo-European period. He expressly says that it was not: 'The idea of a god of oaths (*Varuṇa*), of a god of contracts (*Mitra*), of Truth as the highest principle, these ideas were formed by the Aryans. They do not date from the Indo-European period, but on the other hand there is not the slightest reason to suppose that they were borrowed from outside' (*op. cit.* p. 40). But the Irish evidence was not known to him. We may now go further and say that the belief in Truth as the life-giving principle and sustaining power in the world, is a common Indo-European heritage. It appears in Greek thought as the *lógos* of Heraclitus of Ephesus, and finds perhaps its grandest expression in the opening lines of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> There was a similar notion in Egypt. Wagner compares Egyptian *ma'at* 'truth' to Vedic *ṛta* and Irish *fir*, so that there is a possibility of borrowing, or of diffusion from a common

<sup>1</sup> Raymond E. Brown says that Ephesus is the traditional site of the Fourth Gospel but he prefers to explain *logos* here as the Word of the Lord, *logos kyriou*, *The Gospel according to John* (N.Y. 1966), 520. He goes on to say that the concept of a creative word of God is not confined to Hebrew thought, for it is found in the Near East as far back as the third millennium B.C.; and he cites W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (N.Y., Anchor ed., 1957), pp. 195, 371-72 (= earlier edd. 145, 235).



source.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of *ṛta* by Lüders may have some importance for the history of Greek philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

The gods of the Veda fall into groups which are not always clearly distinguished, and indeed the individual gods are sometimes not easily distinguished one from another. Devas, Ādityas and Asuras are mentioned, and of these the Devas are the gods in general, the word being cognated with *Dyaus*, Greek *Zēus*, and Latin *deus*, Irish *dia*, Welsh *dyw*. The Ādityas are a group of gods, often six, who were sons of *Aditi*, and of whom *Mitra*, *Varuṇa*, *Aryaman* are the important ones. But elsewhere *Aditi* is mother of all the gods (RV I, 139, 11). The Asuras are sometimes presented as enemies of the Devas, but only four times in the Rgveda and only in late hymns. In earlier passages *asura* is an adjective meaning 'powerful', and is used of various gods, notably of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*. Macdonell suggests that it was associated with the concept of *māyā* 'occult power', and that this use led to the later pejorative sense of 'demon'. In the Avesta *Ahura* became the name of the supreme god. In later Vedic literature (*Brāhmaṇas* and *Upanishads*) *asura* in the pejorative sense was felt to contain the negative *a-* and so there arose the term *sura* 'god'.

There is another division of the Vedic gods into three

<sup>1</sup> Trans. Phil. Soc. 1909, 69 p. 224. The Hebrew *emeth* 'truth' of Ps. 19 and Ps. 119 might be in the same tradition, but I have no competence in Hebrew. See, however, J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* 187-199.

<sup>2</sup> The Cosmos (in Origen's *De Principiis*) is a mighty living creative, sustained and kept in being by the Logos, which functions like the Platonic World-soul. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* 127-8. He refers to Princ. 2, 1, 2.

groups, dwelling in heaven, in the atmosphere, and on earth respectively. They are supposed to be thirty-three in number, and in one passage (RV I, 139, 11) there are eleven in each group. *Dyaus*, *Sūrya*, *Savitar*, *Viṣṇu*, and the Ādityas are among the celestial gods; *Indra*, *Rudra*, *Vāyu*, and the *Maruts* are gods of the atmosphere; *Agni*, *Soma*, *Prthivī*, and the river-goddesses are earth-dwellers. *Indra* is the lord of the gods and is much addicted to *soma*. His weapon is the thunderbolt, and there are various notions as to its material form (Macdonell, p. 55). He has a golden chariot which is swifter than thought. Sometimes he is drawn by the horses of *Sūrya*, and sometimes he is the charioteer of *Vāyu* ('Wind'). He is often coupled with *Agni*, and sometimes identified with *Sūrya*.

The Vedic gods had a beginning, for they were born of *Dyaus* and *Prthivī*, the parents of all creatures. They were originally mortal, and acquired immortality by drinking *soma*, or else it was bestowed on them by *Savitar* (4, 54, 2), or by *Agni* (6, 7, 4). Moreover, some were earlier than others: earlier gods (*pūrve*) are mentioned, and the *Atharva-veda* mentions ten gods as having existed before the others (11, 8, 10). Some gods may belong to pre-Aryan tradition, for example *Tvaṣṭṛ*, the Indian *Hermes*, who fashioned *Indra's* bolt out of the bones of the sage *Dadhīca* (Macdonell, p. 117).

The gods of the Celts are less well known than the Vedic gods. In Gaul, from where the earliest evidence comes,<sup>1</sup> there seem to have been a few great gods, *Sucellos* who carries a hammer (pl. 16), *Cernunnos* who has a deer's antlers on his head (pl. 7), *Taranis* the God of the Wheel

<sup>1</sup> P.M. Duval, *Les dieux de la Gaule* (Paris, 1957).



(pl. 17), *Grannos*, perhaps *Camulos*; and scores of minor local deities. We have more than four hundred names, of which some three hundred occur only once.

The great god of the Celts was *Lugus*, whose name occurs on the Continent in three dedications, two of them in the plural (*Lugoues*, *Lugouibus*).<sup>1</sup> and in the place-name *Lug(u)dunum* which is attested over a wide area of Celtic territory from Liegnitz in Silesia to Laon in Normandy. In Ireland, and to a lesser degree in Wales, *Lug* (W. *Llue*) survives as an individual god, and he has a name and qualities that set him apart.

The plan of Irish mythology is far from clear. There seem to have been at least two groups of gods, those who dwelt in earth-mounds throughout Ireland, and those who dwelt in islands beyond the sea, or under the sea. The lord of the former group is *Echaid Ollathair* ('great father'), also called the *Dagda* ('good god'). He is the father of *Oengus* ('unique strength') by the river-goddess *Boann* ('cow-finder'). The birth of *Oengus* echoes the Greek legend of *Amphitryon*: the *Dagda* sent *Elcmaire*, husband of *Boann*, on an errand for nine months, at the end of which *Oengus* was born. When he had grown up, he got possession of the dwelling of *Elcmaire*, *Bruig na Boinne* (the bronze-age burial mound called 'New Grange' near Drogheda) by a ruse. He asked leave to possess it 'for a night and a day', and when *Elcmaire* sought to resume possession of it, *Oengus* said that 'day and night' meant forever.

These four, and *Midir* of *Bri Léith* (near Ardagh, Co.

<sup>1</sup> Holder, *Altkeltischer Sprachchatz* 345; CIL II 2812; XIII 5078; A. Tovar, *The Ancient Languages of Spain and Portugal* (N.Y. 1961) 85 and n. 45.

Longford), *Dian Cécht* the leech, *Creidne* the smith, *Luchta* the wright, all belong to the earth-dwellers, later called *Tuatha Dé Danann* ('tribes of the goddess Danu'). The origin of the name is uncertain and it first occurs quite late, in the saga of *The Battle of Moytura*. O'Rahilly suggests that it derives from that of the *Trí Dé Dána* ('three gods of craftsmanship'), *Brian*, *Iuchar* and *Iucharba*, who play no great part in the surviving texts. It is tempting to connect it with that of Vedic *Dānu*, mother of the demon *Vritra* whom Indra slew, but the vowel in the first syllable of Irish *Danann* is short.<sup>1</sup>

The chief of the second group is *Manannán Mac Lir* ('M. son of the Sea'), and others who belong to it are *Labraid Swift-Hand-on-Sword*, *Aed Abrat*, *Eogan Inbir*, the maidens *Fand* and *Ethne In Gubai*, but only *Mannanán* is prominent. His name is somehow connected with that of the Isle of Man (Irish *Manann*).<sup>2</sup> *Donn* is the god of the dead and dwells in the Underworld to which all men descend after death. He is sometimes regarded as the father of men, and thus resembles the Vedic *Yama*. In the Welsh 'Mabinogion', *Annwn* seems to be a god of the Underworld.

Opposed to the *Tuatha Dé Danann* are the *Fir Bolg*, whom the *Tuatha Dé Danann* conquered and drove out of Ireland. O'Rahilly thought that they were to be identified in origin with the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, but this seems to me very unlikely. There is perhaps an analogy with the

<sup>1</sup> *Danann* may be gen. sg. of a name *Danu*, which does not occur in the nominative, or it may be indeclinable, see EIHM 308 n. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Vendryes, *Etudes Celtiques* 6 (1954), 239 ff.



enmity of Hindu Devas and Asuras, which Geldner regarded as dating back to the Aryan period.<sup>1</sup>

The names of the Celtic gods show little resemblance to the Hindu names. There are no Gaulish or Welsh or Irish names cognate with Indra, Agni, Mitra or Varuṇa, nor with Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu of Puranic tradition. The Gaulish god *Esus* does bear a name akin to Vedic *āsura* (Avestic *ahura*) 'powerful, strong', and Irish *Echaid*, the name of the *Dagda*, can be identified with *āsvapati*, an epithet of Indra in the R̥gveda, and proper name of a Kaikeya in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (10, 6, 1, 2) and of the father of Sāvitrī in the Mahābhārata; or indeed with paśupati 'lord of animals', an epithet of Śiva. The second would be made more probable, if one could connect the figure of *Cernunnos*, surrounded by animals, on the Gundestrup Cauldron (pl. 7) with that on the Mohen-jo-Daro seal. (pl. 8) But since this is presumably pre-Aryan, we must hesitate to do so.<sup>2</sup> Vedic Aryaman is close to the Gaulish personal name *ariomanus*.<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, common features. In both areas the god may have a female companion who in India is regarded as his *Śakti* or source of energy. Thus *Indra* has *Sacī*, *Śiva* has *Umā* and *Viṣṇu* has *Śrī-Lakṣmī*, and they

<sup>1</sup> R̥gveda III 352. See, however, p. 135 above.

<sup>2</sup> F. O. Schrader argues strongly for a connection between the Mohen-jo-daro seal and the *Cernunnos* figure, and accepts Marshall's opinion that the former represents a fore-runner of Śiva; but he would explain the connection by borrowing through contacts between the Celts of the Middle Danube and the court of Mithridates, ZDMG 88, 185 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Holder, *Alt-keltischer Sprachschatz* 216.

appear together on monuments. In Gaul we find *Sucellos* and *Nantosuelta* (pl. 6), *Grannos* and *Sirona*, *Luxovius* and *Brixia* as companions. But there is nothing of this in the Veda, so that it is doubtful whether the evidence can be used for our purpose. The point might be made that the notion of fertility, which finds such gross expression in the *āsvamedha* and in the Irish rite described by Giraldus (p. 108) is also reflected by these divine couples. Madame Jonval says in her *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*: 'The union of the god of the tribe with the goddess of the earth, of *Sucellos* with *Nantosuelta*, of the *Dagda* with *Boann*, projects on the plane of mythology what the union of the king with the animal incarnation of the goddess realizes on the plane of ritual, namely the marriage of the human group with the fertile soil, which is the necessary condition for the prosperity of the tribe' (p. 93).

The great Celtic god *Lugus* mentioned above, in Ireland *Lug Lámfota* ('of the long hand'), in Wales *Llew Llaw Gyffes* ('of the cunning hand') has features which do suggest a long tradition from the distant past, and even some affinity with Vedic mythology. There is no early tradition to explain the Irish epithet, and the passage of the Welsh tale *Math* son of *Mathonwy*, explaining the Welsh form, is of little interest. *Llew* aims at a wren and hits it. The queen says: 'With a deft (*cyffes*) hand has the fair one hit it'. And so he was called *Llew Llaw Gyffes*.<sup>1</sup>

It is the Irish form, equivalent to Sanskrit *dirgha-bāhu*, *mahā-bāhu*, both used of the Vedic gods, which attracts our attention. *Savitar* in the R̥gveda is called *pṛthu-pāṇi* ('of

<sup>1</sup> G. Jones and T. Jones, *The Mabinogion* 66.



the wide hand'), not quite the same as the Irish word;<sup>1</sup> and the idea seems to be that at dawn and sunset he stretches out his hand into the sky to command the sun and moon and stars, and to order the succession of day and night. He raises all men and animals in the morning, and brings them to rest at night (4, 53, 3; 6, 71, 2; 7, 45, 1). Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra and Rudra cannot resist the orders of Savitar (3, 38, 9). The raising of his arms is characteristic, for Agni is said to raise his arms like Savitar (1, 95, 7).

In 1926-27 at the Collège de France, Meillet discussed the interdiction of words, and pointed out that while the word for 'foot' is common to most Indo-European dialects, there is no common Indo-European word for 'hand'. He spoke of a book by Hermann Güntert, then recently published, *Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (Halle, 1923) in which there is an account of Scandinavian rock-sculptures of a god with a hand much bigger than his body, which he raises above his head, and whom Güntert referred to as 'The God with the Large Hand'.<sup>2</sup> Meillet suggested that his sacred hand might have caused the word for 'hand' in Indo-European to be tabooed.<sup>3</sup> However that may be, Lug seems to be the same god.<sup>4</sup> In the Irish saga, *The Battle of Moytura*, he appears as one who has the special gifts of each of the other

<sup>1</sup> As it happens I have not found *dīrgha-bāhu* 'long-armed' applied to Savitar, and *Llawhir* in Welsh is an epithet of Cadwallon, so the word is not here of great importance.

<sup>2</sup> For a different explanation see P. Thieme in *Language, Society and Culture* (ed. D. Hymes), not available to me.

<sup>3</sup> On Lug and the God with the Large Hand, see I. Gricourt, *Ogam* 7, (1955) 63 ff.

<sup>4</sup> H. Gunterty *op. cit.* 162 ff.; P. Sebillot, *folklore de France* I 35, cited by L. Langyel, *L'Art Gaulois* (Montrouge-Scine, Edition, Corvina 1984), p. 11.

gods all combined in his own person, and the conduct of the battle is left to him. From his name we can say with probability that *Lug* is the God with the Large Hand. From what is said of Savitar in the Rigveda it seems possible that this God with the Large Hand is Savitar whom all creatures obey.

One curious fact about Lug remains to be mentioned. The dedication to the *Lugoues* at Osma in Tarragona in Spain is made by the guild of shoemakers (*collegio sutorum*). In the *Mabinogi* of *Manawydan fab Llyr*, *Lleu* appears disguised as a shoemaker; and the God with the Large Hand sculptured on the rock at Backa in Sweden is said to be called *Skomakeren* ('The Shoemaker') by the peasants down to the present day; and in Morbihan (Le Cordelier) in Bittany, the sun is called *Sabotier* ('shoemaker'), because he sprits shoes with his heat, and so makes work for cobblers.

Yama was king of the dead, having been the first man to die and to discover the way to the Underworld. He and his twin sister, Yamī, were the first parents from whom all men are descended.<sup>1</sup> The Irish god, *Donn*, was king of the dead, having been the first of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* to die, and he was the father of men to whom all would return after death.<sup>2</sup> We have seen that the Gaulish god *Esus* bears a name cognate with Vedic *ásura* (p. 138).

Then there are the legends of Lough Ree and Lough Neagh according to which a well formed by the untimely staling of a giant horse bursts out over the surrounding country.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geldner, Rigveda III 132-3.

<sup>2</sup> EIHM 481-84, 492 f.

<sup>3</sup> Metr. Dinds. III 454 ff.; IV 66 ff.



In the Rigveda we are told that the Maruts cause the stallion to make water (1,64,6). They bestow the rain of heaven and pour abundantly the streams of the stallion (5, 85, 6). They assume a golden colour when they make water with the steed (2, 34, 13). It seems that there is here a motif common to the two traditions.

One may now think differently too of an article by Foucher entitled 'Couple tutélaire dans la Gaule et dans l'Inde',<sup>1</sup> in which the Gaulish pair, *Sucellos* and *Nantosuelta* are shown to appear in India as *Pāncika* and *Hārītī* in Greco-Buddhist effigies. Sixty years ago this was explained as due to Greek influence both at Alesia and at Peshawar. Now we must allow for the possibility of a common Indo-European myth as the source of both images.

The legend of Yama and Yamī, and that of Lough Neagh, and the Gaulish sculpture discussed by Foucher are not in themselves convincing examples, nor would I insist on them, still less rely on them; but invoking Wittgenstein's principle I would say: 'We can doubt every single one of these facts, but can we doubt them all?'

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Arch. (1912) 241-49; RC 35 (1914), 121-111.

## EPILOGUE

The mystery of the Indo-Europeans is not solved by any of this fresh evidence about their literature and beliefs, but our concept of them can be reviewed and perhaps improved. Dumézil has shown that there were three social classes among them, priest, warrior and husbandman, and that a corresponding ideology can be traced in the mythology of several Indo-European peoples. It was already known that they had heroic poetry, lyric in form and epic in content, songs in praise of famous men, *ākṣiti śrāvaḥ*. The metrical system was based on a line with a fixed number of syllables, of which the first part was free as to quantity and the cadence fixed. We may now suppose, as Windisch always maintained, that they had a prose narrative form in which verse was used only for direct speech, and then only for moments of emotional intensity. Some of the commonplace motifs employed in their heroic tales can be identified with fair probability.

The Indo-European had tribal kings, who were thought of as stretching (\**reg-*) a rod to govern the people, and who were responsible for the fertility of the soil and the prosperity of the whole tribe. The inauguration of the king was a fertility rite, perhaps with the notion of a goddess of fertility whom the king must wed. His power and vigour



might be renewed as he grew old, by the sacrifice of a substitute victim.

There was a developed system of customary law, of which the laws concerning marriage, and the creditor's fast are recognisable features. The family, for legal purposes, extended to four generations. Chariots drawn by horses were the normal means of transport for kings and noblemen, and the chariot was used in battle. The Indo-Europeans were drivers, not riders of horses.

The Indo-Europeans believed in Truth as the supreme power by which all creation is governed. The God with the Large Hand, patron of shoemakers(?), is a modest and uncertain addition to the Indo-European theogony. The heavenly waters, and sacred rivers as bringers of prosperity, seem to have been part of the Indo-European creed.

Several motifs in the narrative literature, the love of the unseen one (*adr̥ṣṭa-kāma*), the five Nalas, the Act of Truth, the reward for hearing a sacred text (*śravaṇa-phala*) have a claim to be considered as ancient Indo-European tradition.

The mystery becomes less mysterious. The Indo-Europeans were at an advanced stage of civilization, of which we know so little because they left no written documents to posterity. The extent to which oral tradition can be trusted, and the conditions in which it is best preserved, have not been closely studied until recently,<sup>1</sup> but the agreement between Indian and Irish tradition with regard to the motifs mentioned above points to a common origin. The resemblance between parts of the *Mānava Dharma-śāstra* and the early Irish law-tracts is very remarkable. It has been sup-

<sup>1</sup> HIL. I 35-40.

posed that the Indo-Europeans were on a very low cultural level. Meillet suggested long ago that they might be at the same level as the African negro or the natives of North America (Introd. 28). Later (1920) this opinion was modified: 'The peoples who spoke Indo-European may be classed as barbarians, as may the Celtic or Germanic invaders of a later time. But their civilisation was fairly advanced... We must suppose that they were capable of conquering territories and administering them, and that they were superior to many other peoples' (*Langue Grecque*<sup>2</sup> 9). It may be that we shall be led to modify it further, and to consider the possibility that the cultural level of the Indo-European period was not far removed from that of the Vedic age in India.

The absence of writing could lead us astray. Winternitz has observed that the Indians of the Vedic period, and even of the early period of Buddhism, did not preserve their literature by means of writing, although writing was probably known and used for commerce and perhaps for legal purposes. The absence of writing does not in itself mean a very low cultural level, nor indeed does its presence guarantee a high one.

Archaeology can tell us nothing certain about the Indo-Europeans until we are sure of their original home. We know nothing about their art, but we can claim to know something about their literature and about their habits, institutions and beliefs. Lüders attributed the concept of Truth as the supreme power (*ṛta=aśa*) to the Indo-Iranians, and added that it was a cultural achievement that other peoples might envy.<sup>1</sup> But it was a concept cherished already by

<sup>1</sup> *Varuṇa* 40.



the Indo-Europeans themselves, and is a strong indication of their moral stature.

We have noted resemblances between the Hindu and Irish legal systems. Now that the *Corpus Iuris Hiberniae* is at last to be made available,<sup>1</sup> more light may be thrown upon ancient Indo-European society.

The Indo-Aryans in the East and the Celts in the West have best preserved Indo-European tradition in language and literature, in law, institutions and perhaps in religion. In several instances, the syntax of the verb, the prose-and-verse form in narrative, the praise of famous men by the poets, in the concept of kingship and its ritual, in the forms of marriage, in the beliefs concerning Truth as a dynamic and controlling power in the universe, we have seen that Indian and Irish documents explain or confirm each other. Ever since the discovery of the Indo-European family of languages, Sanskrit has rightly held the first place in the study of Comparative Grammar. In the wider field of Indo-European civilisation, Celtic also is of some importance, and in recent years Celtic has been a focus of interest for prehistorians, medievalists and historians of art and literature.

My hope is that this book may introduce Celtic studies to Indian readers, for whom it has primarily been written, and also that it may increase the interest in Indian studies in the English-speaking world. The common heritage that India and Ireland share should be a bond between them. Allowing for their great disparity in size and influence, the two countries have much reason in the history of the last two hundred years for mutual sympathy. Prompted by memories of the past, it may be that they can help each other in the future.

<sup>1</sup> The first of three projected volumes is to appear in 1972.

## APPENDIX

H. Oldenberg. *Geschichte der altindischen Prosa*  
(Abh. d. kgl. Ges. zu Göttingen, B. 16 (1916-17), pp. 53-99.

Oldenberg's paper, 'the History of Early Indian Prose', begins with a study of the earliest Sanskrit prose, namely the prose passages in the Yajur-veda, and the prose parts of the Athavara-veda and the Grhya-sūtras. He then examines the earlier and later Brāhmaṇas, the Upanishads and the early Buddhist prose (pp. 1-51).

The second part of the paper is devoted to the prose and verse narrative form, and this part is summarised here.

### Prose and Verse Narrative

Narrative in the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads is religious. The secular narratives of this early time are lost. However, a few tales are preserved which are without religious purpose and are simple narrative: for example, the story of Śunaḥśepa, the Suparṇa story and some Buddhist Jātakas. From all these, many paths lead to the world of the epic, which lies outside the purely religious literature.

The stories which belong to discussions of ritual are limited to brief narrative, but there are others in which some one raises a subtle question or utters a memorable doctrine, in which lyric and emotional dialogue occurs, or where some lasting and important circumstance arises, and there verse appears in the midst of the prose.



Every reader of the Brāhmaṇas will think at once of the story of Purūravas and Ūrvaśī with its passionate verse dialogue from the Rīgveda. Besides this example, I will point to a didactic passage in the same Brāhmaṇa (SB XI 5, 5.). Here the Gods are trying to disperse darkness cast before them by the Asuras. They approach Prajāpati for advice, and speak in verse and he replies in verse. The narrative is prose.

#### The Sunahsepa Story

(Ait. Br. VII 13-18; trsl. Keith, His. 25, p. 299; cf. H. Oldenberg, ZDMG 37, 79)

First we notice that the introductory matter is told in the same detail as the principal story. A feeling for perspective has not yet developed. The king's longing for a son is told at length and with much repetition. Then Rohita's exile in the forest is told in the same way, and with repetition (in the same words) of Indra's warnings on five separate occasions.<sup>1</sup> So far as psychology and ethics are concerned, there is no attempt here to edify, save in the mercy of Agni—and in the final deliverance of Śunahśepa, which is achieved by means of priestly recitations.

#### The Suparna Story

(Ait Br. III 25, 1; Kāthaka Upanishad 30, 31; MBh. I 1545; trsl. Keith, Hist.).

marks the earliest form of Indian narrative, only a distant fore-runner of the rich and delicate art of a later age (61).

This is the story of a fight between Kadrū and Vinatā, and of the stealing of the *soma* from heaven by the bird Garuḍa. Here only the verse passages are given, and each

<sup>1</sup> This is just as in the modern folk-tale.

narrator evidently told the prose parts in his own words. Later the whole tale appears in verse in the Mahābhārata.

#### Episodes from the Mahābhārata

The *Pauṣya-parvan* is mostly prose, but the praise of the Aśvins is in verse. The Utaṅka story (I 800) is mainly prose. The conclusion of this *Pauṣya-parvan* is in verse, and probably by a later composer.

The third book has more prose-verse passages about Mārkaṇḍeya (III 13, 143 ff.; 13, 248 ff.), and there appear to be surviving fragments of the original prose-verse *Vana-parvan* (p. 68). Note also the prose-verse form of the Śibi story here (III 10, 557), in contrast to that in the *Tirtha-yātrā*.

These passages in the Mahābhārata are the earliest certain specimens of Indian narrative prose, inasmuch as the tales from the Brāhmaṇas may have been influenced by their Brāhmaṇa prose frame-work, and this applies also to the stories in the Buddhist Canon, if we wish to consider them in this connection as perhaps earlier than the prose passages of the epic (70.).

There is further valuable evidence in the epic for the prose-and-verse form of the narrative, but it is less obvious than in the passages discussed so far. In the story of the meeting of the two travelling kings, verses occur in the midst of the prose which are expressly referred to as *śloka-trayam*, 'a triad of *ślokas*' (Mbh. III, 13,250), and they closely resemble the verse dialogue in the corresponding Jātaka (NR. 151). Sometimes two in 'purely metrical passages certain verses are designated as 'verse', and thus distinguished from the rest, and these special verses are found to agree, more or less, with verses in two prose-and-verse Jātakas.



Clearly they alone are original verse, whereas the rest of the verse has taken the place of an earlier original prose (73-74).

#### Buddhist Stories (p. 75)

The two great stories, *Mahāvagga* I about the beginning of the Buddha's teaching, and *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta* about his last days on earth, illustrate the prose-verse form. (Besides, there are many stories without verses where no occasion arises for the use of this ornament. 'Admiration or wonder at an event, triumph, quiet happiness, exalted reflexion upon the ordinances that are made manifest in events' find expression, however, in verse (p. 75). (The *Sutta-nipāta*, *Thera-gāthā* and *Therī-jāthā* are then briefly considered).

Verse occurs also apart from direct speech. It is used occasionally—the occurrences are not frequent—for effective repetition of what has already been told in prose. (Cf. in Irish the *Dindshenchas*, *Acallam na Senórach*, etc.). In some chapters of the Pali canon, whole passages of narrative are in verse; and here there are often chasms where the hearer is apparently expected to supply the missing sense. Usually the sense is supplied in a prose bridge-passage (p. 79).

#### The Jātakas

Oldenberg insists (against Keith) that here the verse alone is the old canonical text, and the prose a later commentary, which however supplies necessary matter. This latter therefore was originally told by the reciter *ad lib.* (p. 82). This is confirmed by the Irish evidences as Windich, said, and by the Welsh evidence of the *englynion* in the 'Red Book of Hergest'.

(There follows a discussion of objections raised by Keith and others to the notion of an original form for the Jātakas, consisting of verse dialogue, for which a prose narration was later supplied—what Oldenberg calls *ākhyāna*-form. As there is now probably general agreement with the verdict of Lüders quoted above, Oldenberg's discussion need not be summarised here, (81-82).

The existing type of prose-verse narrative in the Jātakas cannot be explained away, nor can its authenticity be impugned. But since the corpus of verse without prose survives as part of the Pali canon, we possess here, as in the *Suparna* story, a clear and certain example of a narrative tradition which preserves only the verse, and leaves the formulation of the prose to the individual narrator at a given moment (p. 89).

#### The Rigveda (p. 89)

Agastya and Lopamudra, mentioned by Munshi, *History and Culture* II viii

Having traced this narrative type from the Brāhmaṇas to the Mahābhārata and the Jātakas, let us turn back to the most remote period of antiquity, and see whether the evidence of the Rigveda can and must be explained in the light of this later testimony.

There are hymns which, as they stand, are obscure and seem to require additions to give them meaning, speeches and replies for which the thread of the argument is missing. Consider I 179; III 53; VIII 100. In each case the same phenomenon appears that we encounter in the Jātakas, if we read the verse without the prose; the same fragmentation, the same reference to circumstances which are not apparent and



are not obviously to be understood by the hearer; the same changes of situation, and changes of metre.

The interval of time is not a reason for doubt, as this *ākhyāna*-type appears already in the *Brāhmaṇas* (*Suṇahśepa*). And in the later documents we have not merely the prose-verse form, but even the *Rigveda* form, verse without the prose. (90-91).

One *sūkta* is mentioned as being a doubtful case, the *Vṛṣākapi* hymn, X 26. Here the uniformity of metre and the refrain give an appearance of unity to the hymn. *Ākhyāna*-form is not here impossible, and any way this one doubtful example is not a reason for rejecting the clear evidence for the presence of *Ākhyāna* hymns in the *Rigveda* (95-96).

#### Prose-Verse Narrative (p. 96)

This is the prose-verse narrative in early and later stages of Indian literature. This narrative form is not peculiar to India; it occurs frequently in areas both of advanced and of primitive cultures, in both ancient and modern times. So, for example, among the Australian bushmen, in the Book of Genesis, in modern Semitic tradition, and on Indo-European territory among the Celts.

Anthropology may discover the origin of the whole form. Perhaps in narrative, which is in fact poetic prose, metrical speech first appeared where the primitives used verse independently of narrative, namely in addressing the gods, pronouncing a magic formula, a blessing or a curse, where emotion sought expression, or wit posed a riddle or declared its solution. It is natural, then, that verse should appear mainly in direct speech; when passion was aroused

and rival interests opposed in challenge and reply, the verse-form was specially apt.

The further advance was the elimination of the awkward contrast between formal verse and formless prose. Art triumphed over artlessness. Either the prose disappeared, leaving the field to verse, or the prose maintained itself by taking on artistic form. The metrical stories from the life of the Buddha in the *Sutta-nipāta* illustrate the first alternative, and also the later verse *Jātakas*. This is the final epic form. Perhaps the earliest example of the second alternative is the *Kuṇāla-jātaka*, where the prose is in *Kāvya* style. (Cf. the IL. revision of the *Tain Bo Cualnge*).



# LIST OF PLATES

- 1 STONE PILLAR FROM PFELZFELD
- 2 STONE PILLAR FROM TUROC
- 3 BRONZE HELMET, ORIGINALLY COVERED WITH GOLD FOIL
- 4 BRONZE MIRROR FROM BIRDLIP, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND
- 5 BRONZE SHIELD FROM THE THAMES AT BATTERSEA, LONDON
- 6 BRONZE PLAQUE FROM TAL-Y-LLYN, MERIONETHSHIRE, WALES
- 7 INSIDE PANEL OF THE GUNDESTRUP CAULDRON
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- 9 PILLAR WITH SEVERED HEADS
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- 24 OGAM INSCRIPTIONS





STONE PILLAR FROM PFELZFELD  
*Found at St. Goar in the Hundrück. Height 148 cm.  
Carved in relief in the La Tène style. Rheinisches  
Landesmuseum, Bonn, Germany.*





STONE PILLAR FROM TUROC  
*Carved in the La Tène Style, from Country Galway,  
 Ireland.*

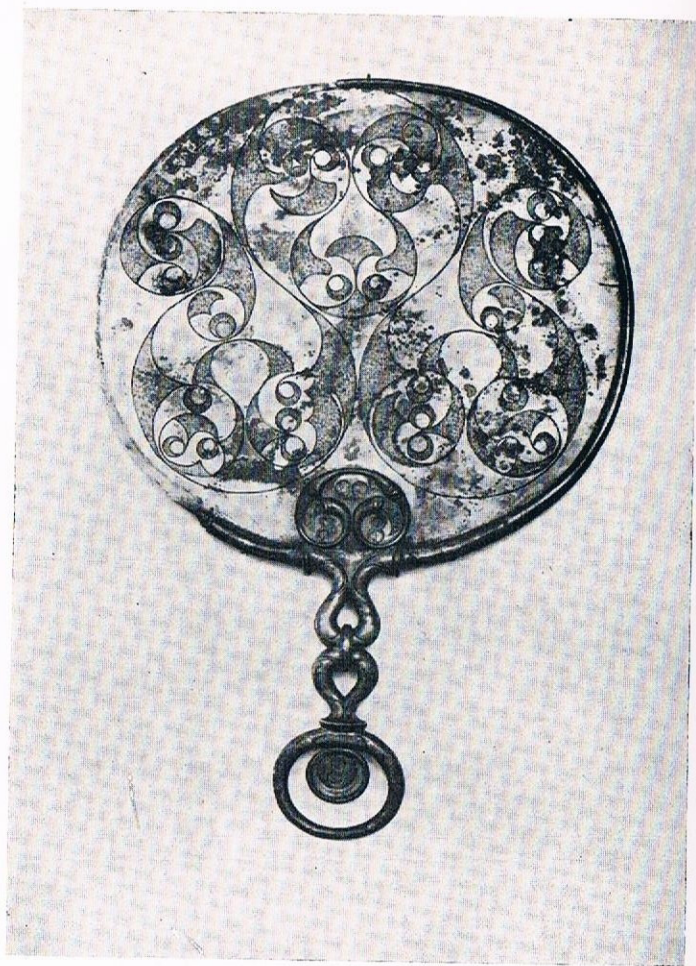
[ 2 ]



BRONZE HELMET, ORIGINALLY COVERED WITH GOLD FOIL  
*16 cm. high : Early La Tène Period.*

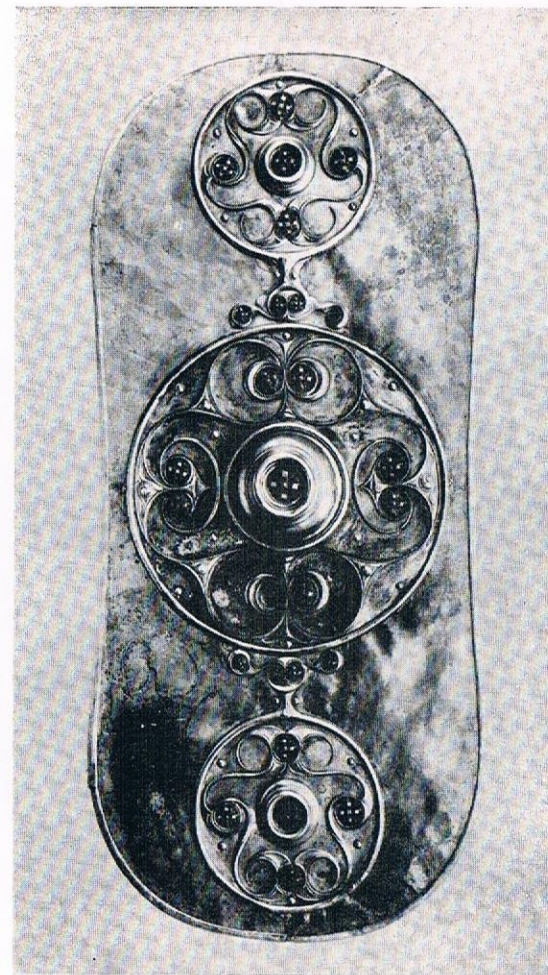
[ 3 ]





BRONZE MIRROR  
FROM BIRDLIP, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND,  
*The back is decorated with finely engraved ornament :  
Early 1st cen A.D. City Museum, Gloucester.*

[ 4 ]



BRONZE SHIELD  
*From the Thames at Battersea, London  
Early 1st century A.D. 80 cm. high :  
British Museum*

[ 5 ]

3

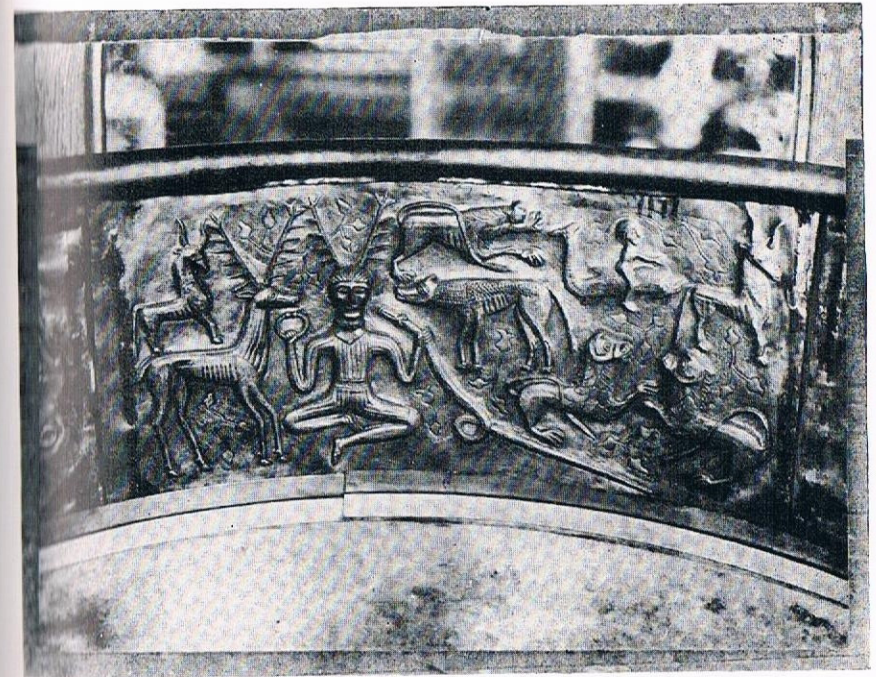




BRONZE PLAQUE

*From Tal-y-Llyn, Merionethshire, Wales  
Early or Middle La Tène. Height, 16 cm.*

[ 6 ]



INSIDE PANEL OF THE GUNDESTRUP CAULDRON

*A copper cauldron plated with silver. Diameter 68 cm., weight 8,885 kg. The date and provenance are uncertain. Jacobsthal suggested that it came from the Celtic area of the lower Danube, and belongs to the 1st cen. B.C. Harskes thought that it was a Celto-Ligurian work of the 2nd cen. B.C. The 3rd cen. A.D. has also been proposed. The panel shows the Horned God (Cernunnos?) as Lord of Animals.*

[ 7 ]

u





ŚIVA PAŚUPATI  
*The Horned God From Mohen-jo-Daro*  
*(Sindh, India)*

[ 8 ]



PILLAR WITH SEVERED HEADS  
*From Entremont.*

[ 9 ]





STONE RELIEF OF SEVERED HEADS

*From Entremont (Bouches-du-Rhône), France  
The oppidum of Entremont near Aix-en-Provence was the  
religious centre of the Celto-Ligurian tribe of the Salluvii,  
and was destroyed by the Romans in 132 A.D.*

[ 10 ]



CARVED HEAD FROM MELLIFONT ABBEY  
*County Louth, Ireland, c. 1142 A.D.*

[ 11 ]

b





CARVED HEAD, c. 1134 A.D.  
*From Cormac's Chapel, Cashel, County Tipperary.*

[ 12 ]



TARUOS TRIGARANUS  
*The Bull with Three Egrets*  
*Panel from the Paris 'altar', Muséc de Cluny.*

[ 13 ]

7





ESUS CUTTING THE MISTLETOE (?)  
*Panel from the Paris 'altar'.*

[ 14 ]

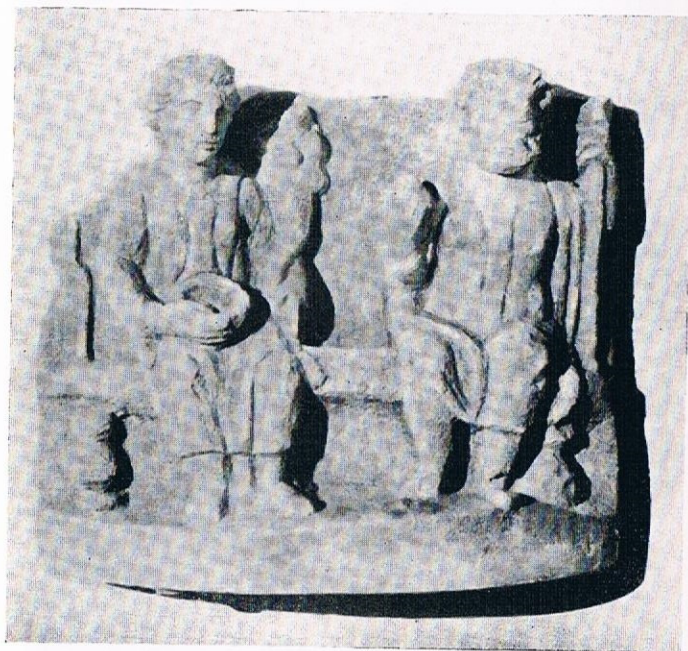


ESUS AND THE TARUOS TRIGAXANUS  
*In the Landesmuseum, Trier, Germany.*

[ 15 ]

8





SUCELLOS & NANTOSUELTA (?)  
*Alesia (Côte d'Or), France.*

[ 16 ]

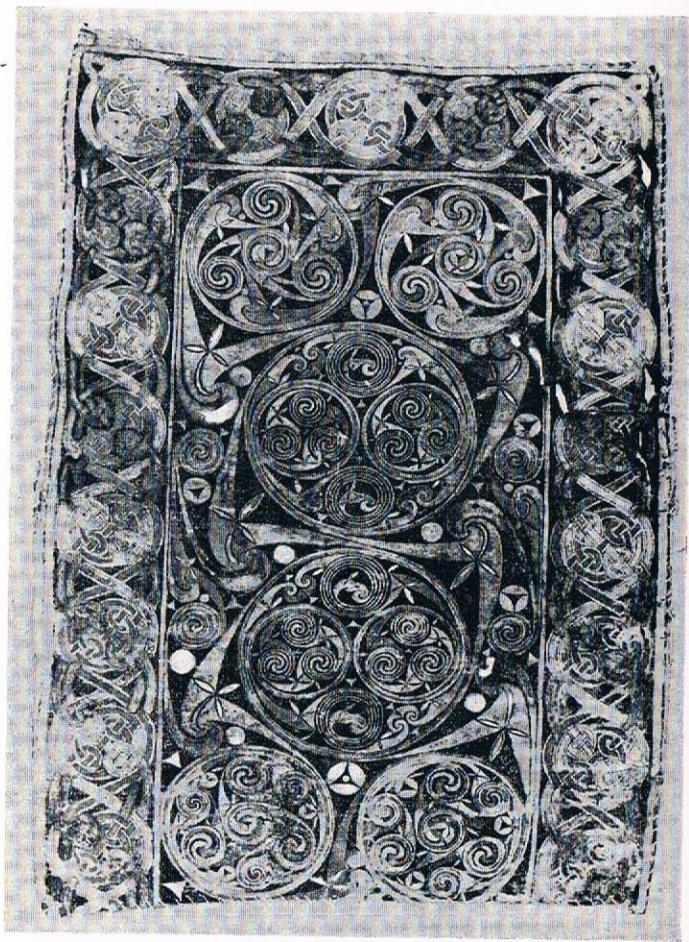


TARANIS, THE GOD OF THE WHEEL  
*From Landouzy, Aisne.*

[ 17 ]

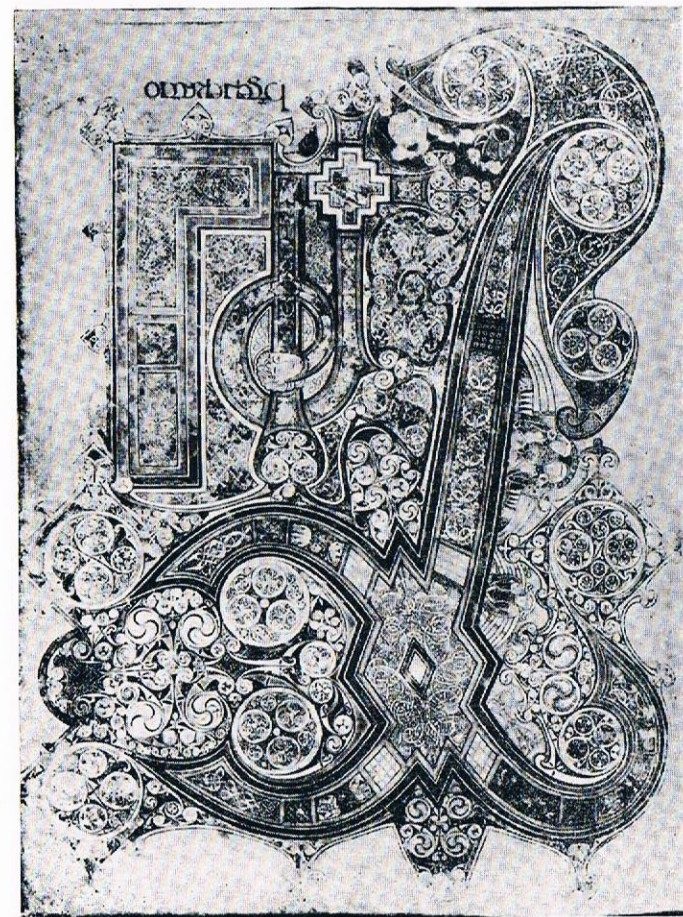
9





"CARPET PAGE" FROM THE BOOK OF DURROW (7th Cen.)  
*This splendid Page shows the tradition of La Tène*  
*Ornament : 24 cm. X 17 cm.*

[ 18 ]



THE GREAT MONOGRAM PAGE, FOLIO 34 A  
*The Book of Kells. 9th cen. (Perhaps the grandest page*  
*that was ever painted.)*

[ 19 ]





PAINTING — THE VIRGIN & CHILD  
Folio 12, *the Book of Kells*, 9th cen.

[ 20 ]



CROSS OF MUIREDACH, EAST FACE (10TH CEN.)  
*Monasterboice, County Louth, Ireland.*

[ 21 ]

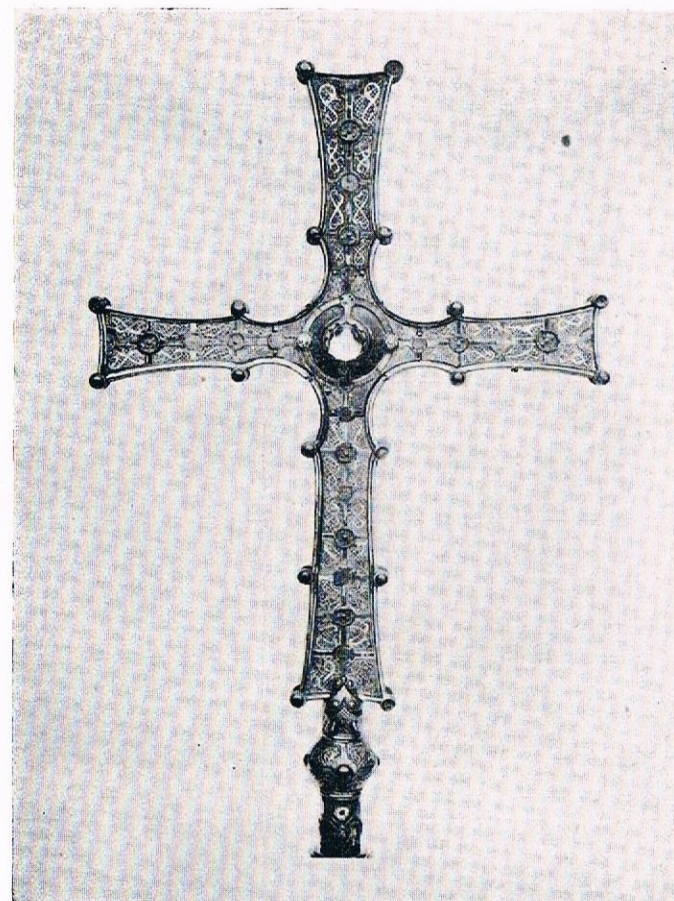
4





THE ARDAGH CHALICE (8TH CEN.)

*One of the finest examples of Irish metalwork. The silver cup is decorated with gold, gilt bronze, and enamel. From Ardagh, County Limerick. National Museum, Dublin.*



THE CROSS OF CONG, c. 1123 A.D.

*A large processional Cross, height 15 cm., made of riveted sheets of bronze, covered with small panels of gilt bronze, which are filled with ornaments of ribbon-work and animal designs. It was made as a reliquary by order of the King of Connacht. National Museum, Dublin.*





OGAM INSCRIPTIONS  
*From Drumlohan, County Waterford, Ireland*  
*(See p. 37)*